Parading Respectability

The cultural and moral aesthetics of the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape, South Africa

Sylvia Bruinders

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For my parents, Vera and Gabriel Bruinders

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PARADING RESPECTABILITY:

The Cultural and Moral Aesthetics of the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape, South Africa

SYLVIA BRUINDERS

AHP Publications

NISC

Published in South Africa on behalf of the African Humanities Program
by NISC (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 377, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa
www.nisc.co.za

First edition, first impression 2017

Publication © African Humanities Program 2017
Text © Sylvia Bruinders 2017

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ISBN: 978-1-920033-19-4 (print)
ISBN: 978-1-920033-20-0 (PDF)
ISBN: 978-1 920033-21-7 (ePub)
Development editor: Leonie Viljoen
Project manager: Peter Lague
Indexer: Michel Cozien
Cover design: Advanced Design Group
Illustrator: Sylvia de Moor

Printed in South Africa by Tandym Print

Acknowledgements
Photographs © Paul Grendon

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Acknowledgements

The manuscript for this publication was prepared with the support of the African Humanities Fellowship Program established by the American Council of Learned Societies with a generous grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. I am also grateful to the University of Cape Town Research Grants and the National Research Foundation Thuthuka Fund for funding the research.

This research would not have been possible without the generosity of the research community I worked with, in particular the St Joseph's Christmas Band, the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union, and the South African United Christmas Bands Board (SAUCBB). Members of these organisations gave generously of their time to answer my many questions and allowed me to participate fully in their activities to understand and write about them. Special thanks to the late Mr Hannes September and Mr Heuvel, both of whom I interviewed several times, as well as to all the other interviewees. I am also grateful for the assistance from members in other unions and boards, notably Mrs Shirley de Kock from the Athlone and District Union, and Mr Cavin Cornelissen from the South African Christmas Bands Board (SACBB).

A special thanks to my "support team" who has made this journey far less arduous than it could have been: Paul Grendon for the beautiful photographs and the many hours spent in the harsh summer sun taking photographs of the parades and competitions in light that was less than ideal; Leonie Viljoen for her meticulous editing and encouragement; Barbara van der Merwe of the African Humanities Program Secretariat for sending me all the relevant information at appropriate times and for her support and enthusiasm for the publication of this book; Julie Strauss, Shaheema Luckan and Brandon Adams from the Bell Music Library at the University of Cape Town who very kindly assisted me with difficult and urgent requests.

Lastly, thanks to my colleagues, friends and family members, especially my parents, for their love, encouragement and support throughout this journey. Your confidence in me has been my strength over the years.

Foreword

Sylvia Bruinders begins her book with a remarkable statement. The displaced beat, she writes, of the *ghoema* rhythm – the sonic emblem of Cape Town and of three of the city's main cultural institutions, the Christmas bands, the Malay choirs and the *klopse* – serves as a "poignant metaphor for a community that stills bears the scars of apartheid dislocation." To study the "*ghoema* musical complex" that unites these three musical traditions, she goes on to state, is to become aware of the "syncopation of the entire social order to which it belongs."

Metaphors are vehicles. As anthropologist James Fernandez argued several decades ago, metaphors enable subjects to move from conditions of ambiguity toward identity, to reach an optimum position in quality space and, ultimately, to "return to the whole." The Christmas bands are such vehicles. For move they do, literally. They not only move members of South Africa's disadvantaged, "coloured", working-class communities toward a space of dignity and moral and cultural value. They also move in parading the streets of Cape Town on Christmas Eve. Most importantly, though, they compel other people to reconsider the valuable contributions working-class "coloured" people have been making and continue to make to the wider cultural fabric of South Africa.

I must include myself in this group of people in need of a more holistic concept of South African music. In 1982, I began figuring out how South African music had evolved in the broader context of colonial and apartheid politics and, most crucially, what role it played in challenging that heinous system of racial oppression and in providing solace and sustenance to those forced to live under its sway. In contrast to colonial and apartheid ideology that viewed "non-white" cultural practice as a passive expression of a putatively inherent and fixed group identity or as a mere adaptation or "acculturation" to an overwhelming alien system, I stressed the role of such practices as sites of transformative action and creative agency. Yet, somehow the rich legacy and present of "coloured" expressive culture did not fit this mould. Whether it was the *klopse*, the Malay choirs, the *Nederlandsliedjies*, the *moppies* or the sounds of the Sufi *dhikr*, the sounds of the Cape were not oppositional enough.

Of course, as a new generation of scholars is now helpfully reminding us, nothing could be further from the truth. The "*ghoema* musical complex" *is* a site of transformation and creativity. Yet, as Bruinders compellingly argues, this transformation follows its own logic, one that in typical *ghoema*, "syncopated" fashion does not always align with or occasionally even runs counter to the broader drift of post-apartheid society from

a distributive-restorative agenda toward a more efficiency-driven, managerial style of governance. Thus, the sound of *ghoema* "dislocation" and the resultant sonic mesh not only masks individual performers' capabilities, it also projects a vision of social order rooted in participation as possessing moral value in and of itself. For instance, the growing professionalization of Christmas bands is increasingly becoming the subject of heated debate, frequently being perceived as an abrogation of the shared community values associated with the "honky", "breathy" sound of bands playing in wide tunings while parading the streets of Cape Town. Another example is the growing presence of women in Christmas bands, a fact that is still widely resented as a threat to "traditional", male-centred forms of organisation. Yet for all the tenacity of this "duality", nicely captured in the book's title, between displays of orderliness redolent of a past history of subordination and stagnation and the making of citizenry of free subjects through collective experience, Bruinders never loses sight of the individuality of the musicians she played with, talked to and writes about. And while this point can hardly be overstated, we should also welcome the possibility that, as the Christmas bands evolve and like the communities nurturing them will occupy a more central role in South African cultural life, new "syncopes" will emerge. For that, after all, is the new *ghoema* way: to keep the music and the people who care about it going; confidently parading through the streets of the Western Cape; in community-lock step and in free, subjectivity-enabling "syncopation".

Veit Erlmann
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Preface

In this monograph, I investigate the Christmas Bands Movement of the Western Cape of South Africa. I document this centuries-old expressive practice of ushering in the joy of Christmas through music by way of a social history of the coloured communities. The term coloured is a local racialised designation for people of mixed descent—often perceived as of mixed race by the segregationist colonial and apartheid ideologues. In the complexity of race relations in South Africa, these communities have emerged largely within the black/white interstices and remained marginal to the sociocultural and political landscape. Their ancestral area is the Western Cape, where most still live and where several of their expressive practices can be witnessed over the festive season in the summer months from December through March. The Christmas Bands Movement is one of three parading practices that are active during this period and is far less visible than the celebrated Minstrel Carnival or the Malay choirs, even though its reach is much wider across the Western Cape Province.

Drawing on Foucault's notion of "embodied subjectivity", theorists on the politics of respectability, and Butler's work on gender and performativity, I explore three main themes and their intersection in the Christmas Bands Movement: subjectivity, respectability and gender politics. First, I investigate how the bands constitute themselves as respectable members of society through disciplinary routines, uniform dress and military gestures. Second, I show how the band members constitute their subjectivity both individually as members and collectively as a band; each has a mutual impact on the other. Even though the notion of subjectivity is more concerned with the inner thoughts and experiences and their concern with respectability is an outward manifestation of a social ideal, these two themes overlap; both relate to how the members constitute themselves even as they are constituted by the practice. Third, I explore how the emergent gender politics, given renewed emphasis in the new South African constitution (1996), has played out in local expressive practices through the women's insistence on being an integral part of the performance activities of the Christmas Bands Movement. Their acceptance into the Christmas bands has transformed the historically gendered perception of the bands as male-only expressive forms. Finally, I illustrate how this cultural practice has gained in popularity during the last twenty-two years of democratic rule in South Africa, which may suggest that the historical marginality of the communities is still prevalent.

Glossary of acronyms and abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
APO	African People's Organisation
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
FHR	Foundation for Human Rights
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IGDB	Ikey Gamba Dance Band
SACBB	South Africa Christmas Bands Board
SACCB	South African Christmas Choir Board
SACM	South African College of Music
SAUCBB	South African United Christmas Bands Board
TLSA	Teacher's League of South Africa
WPCBB	Western Province Christmas Bands Board
WNC	Women's National Coalition

Glossary of local words and phrases

aaptaal/apie taal	ape language
bladmusiek	sheet music
Bo-Kaap	literally above the Cape: a historical Muslim neighbourhood on the slopes of Signal Hill above the city of Cape Town
braai	barbeque
dop system	a despicable payment system used on farms in which part of the weekly wages was paid in alcohol
ghoema rhythm	a syncopated underlying rhythm found in several Western Cape musical practices
Kersfeeskoor	Christmas choir/band
klein bassie	literally 'little bass': a cello slung over the shoulder like a guitar and played pizzicato, like a jazz double bass
klops/klopse	carnival troupe(s)
klopskamer	clubhouse
krief tafel	lobster table
kruis	sharp (in musical notation)
langarm	social ballroom
Malay choirs	a male choir of predominantly Muslims who, like most of the South African Creole community, trace part of their ancestry to Southeast Asian slaves brought to the Cape during the rule of the Dutch East India Company between 1652 and 1806
moppies	comic songs
nagtroepe	night troupes: Malay choirs who parade in the city centre in dull-coloured tracksuits on New Year's Eve
Nederlandsliedjies	Dutch songs
ouens	guys
tafel	a table of local foods and delectable deserts
tamboor	little frame drum
tik	crystal methamphetamines
Tweede Nuwejaar	second day of the New Year, being the annual slave holiday
voorloper	drum major/majorette: voor literally means in front, and loper means a walker, thus meaning the one who walks in front

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Sociopolitical and historical introduction

Christmas Eve 2003 has finally arrived. The St Joseph's Christmas Band gathers at the clubhouse in Second Avenue, Fairways, at around 11 pm to prepare for their all-night visitation to the working-class area of Steenberg, where several members live. The clubhouse is the home of the founding "father", Mr Hannes September, and is in a middle-class area in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. Members of the band are neatly dressed in a uniform consisting of white trousers, a shirt and shoes, a yellow tie, a black blazer with a badge, and a black and yellow band tied around a white hat with a dark feather placed dashingly on the right-hand side. After travelling to Steenberg by bus, they disembark and gather in their marching files, three abreast. They accompany their parade with a Christian march tune, "Onward Christian Soldiers", played up-tempo on wind and string instruments. They enact a military-style parade to a member's house where they perform two Christmas carols outside for the awaiting family and neighbours. Finally, they receive a huge tafel *(a table of local foods and delectable desserts), after having performed in a similar manner at several members' houses. The hours pass by surprisingly quickly. The most beautiful time of the morning is around 3 am and 4 am. It is incredibly quiet and the air is fresh. As the band passes the sleeping houses, performing a Christian march, lights are turned on as some of the occupants peep through the windows to watch and cheer them excitedly; others wave at them sleepily.*

Cape Town's *ghoema* musical complex

Every year from September through March, members of the coloured communities' musical organisations in the Western Cape of South Africa come together to rehearse their repertoire for the festive season, and participate in street marches and cultural competitions.[1] As Christmas and New Year coincide with the summer

vacation in the southern hemisphere, this is a particularly festive time in South Africa, especially in Cape Town, the oldest city, affectionately referred to as the "mother city". Three interrelated disciplines,[2] the Christmas bands, the Malay choirs and the *klopse* (carnival troupes), add to the festive atmosphere in the city. I refer to the three together as the *ghoema* musical complex, as all three are characterised by a particular syncopated rhythm, which has become emblematic of Cape Town and is referred to as the *ghoema* rhythm (see Chapter 2). This musical complex emerged out of the Creole (coloured) communities, for whom inclusion into the nation state has historically been marked by ambivalence. The rhythmic syncopation with its displaced beat serves as a poignant metaphor for a community that still bears the scars of apartheid dislocation. An investigation into the musical complex or parts of it, as this monograph aims, therefore offers possibilities of looking beyond the rhythmical-musical complex to the "syncopation" of the entire social order to which it belongs.

While the members of the Christmas bands are predominantly Christians, the Malay choirs are predominantly Muslims who, like most of the South African Creole community, trace part of their ancestry to the Southeast Asian slaves brought to the Cape during the rule of the Dutch East India Company between 1652 and 1806. The *klopse,* associated with carnavalesque celebrations, were influenced by US blackface minstrelsy (see Cockrell 1987 and Erlmann 1991b, 1996, 1999) and referred to by the English as "coons". They consist of members of both religious groups and have for years been regarded in a derogatory manner, particularly by those coloured people aspiring to middle-class respectability. Although these musical organisations are interrelated and often share personnel – referred to here as "members" – they are distinct cultural practices, associated with distinct performance genres and repertoires – except that the Malay choirs and the *klopse* share a similar repertoire – and the members perceive them as such.

Common to all three practices are the street parades in which they participate during the festive season, the Christmas bands ringing in Christmas morning and the Malay choirs[3] and *klopse* announcing the New Year. Another commonality is the consumption of food at the homes of members of the organisations whom they visit during the street parades in the communities. In an ethnography of the "Coon Carnival", the French sociologist Denis-Constant Martin (1999, 62) speculates that Dutch traditions around Twelfth Night may have been fused with New Year celebrations in the Cape, "in particular the tradition of going from house to house and giving serenades and accepting food." Two other similarities are the wearing of specific uniforms and participating in competitions. However, each organisation has its own organisational structure and set of guidelines and they operate completely independently of one another.

Most South Africans, even people from Cape Town, lump these distinct organisations together or use their names interchangeably, or refer to them solely as "the coons" or "*die klopse*". Such misconceptions are a result of the lack of informed media exposure throughout the years of colonial segregation and apartheid. For many years, the media was largely responsible for caricaturing these practices, and hence the Creole communities from which they emerge, as juvenile and a matter for ridicule (see for instance "New Year's Holidays" 1896; "Out-of-date Coon Carnival" 1968; and Martin 1997).

These cultural activities emerged out of the days of slavery at the Cape of Good Hope when it was still a Dutch colony[4] and became important markers of slave and ex-slave cultural identity, particularly in the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, these cultural expressions became markers of social identity for working-class coloured people and sometimes operated as expressions of opposition to the brutality and dehumanisation of the apartheid state.

There are two probable reasons for the prevalence of these organisations in the Western Cape. Firstly, city clubs, which have a long history since the earliest days of British colonial rule at the Cape, were significant for characterising and preserving a (white) masculine culture (Worden, Van Heyningen and Bickford-Smith 1998, 239). This involved the establishment of prestigious city clubs for men who worked for the colonial administration. These clubs, emerging as they did in the Victorian era, delimited the character of acceptable masculine behaviour of a certain class and set them up for emulation by lower-class males. Until as recently as the 1990s, the lower-class clubs (or disciplines) allowed only male participation in their public events, yet women played an essential supportive role in realising these public events. Secondly, the temperance movement, which established many branches in the Cape (Pearce 1985), made important contributions towards a respectable working-class ethos and, consequently, coloured cultural practices. I explore the effects of the temperance movement on local cultures in Chapter 2, and notions of masculinity within the Christmas bands in various chapters.

An early history of the Cape

The Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias, in 1488, was the first European to round the Cape of Good Hope. However, this windswept though dramatically beautiful cape remained unimportant to European expansion for more than 150 years.[5] It gained in terms of its strategic geographical position in the mid-1600s with the flourishing of the Indian Ocean trade route and the Dutch East India Company's establishment of a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. As the Dutch forbade the enslavement of the indigenous people of the Cape, the Khoekhoe,[6] they imported

slaves from their colonies in the East as well as from East Africa. According to Shell (1994, xxv), all the major language groups of the world (Bantu, Indo-European and Malayo-Polynesian) were represented in the Cape Peninsula by 1660, thus "South Africans began their colonial era with one of the most polyglot populations in the world." The ratio of the origins of the 63 000 slaves brought to the Cape between 1652 and 1808 was as follows: 26.4 per cent from Africa (mostly Mozambique); 25.1 per cent from Madagascar; 25.9 per cent from India and Ceylon; and 22.7 per cent from Indonesia (Shell 1994, 41). Later, when the British colonised the Cape, they brought "prize negroes"[7] that they had captured from slave ships bound for the Americas to work in the Cape. Cape Town always had a high ratio of slaves: the slave per centage of the population in 1806 was 80 per cent and in 1817, 70 per cent (Freund 1979, 223). By 1821, the different population and status groups were as follows: slaves (35%); settlers (38%); free blacks (ex-slaves or ex-convicts from Dutch Eastern possessions, 9%); prize negroes (4%); Khoekhoe (2%); and military personnel and troops (12%) (Shell 1994, 143).

During the years of slavery and in the years up to the mid- to late-nineteenth century, race relations at the Cape were fluid and sexual liaisons between the Khoekhoe, the Europeans and the slaves produced a mixed, integrated society in which the cultures of the tricultural groupings (African, Asian and European) became inextricably interwoven. Other areas of life were far from fluid, however. The situation regarding the three black[8] populations can be summed up as follows. Firstly, even after manumission in 1838, the slaves had little choice but to continue working for their employers. Secondly, Khoekhoe social structures disintegrated due to population decimation through diseases and routine killings. They were integrated into the colonial order, often working alongside the slaves and sharing similar living and social conditions. Thirdly, the "prize negroes" were given apprenticeships, the conditions of which resembled serfdom (Saunders 1994). The white settlers occupied a dominant position in the society, which was already characterised by economic, social and political inequity for blacks. Politically and economically, except for a tiny emergent middle class, the society thus became increasingly polarised along racial lines. In fact, the churches initiated the segregation of social institutions: by the late-eighteenth century, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) had already begun segregationist practices in their churches. After emancipation, the DRC, Wesleyan and Methodist churches instituted separate mission churches for ex-slaves and the Khoekhoe (Bickford-Smith 1995, 25).[9] Separate schools followed: public schools, which taught a range of subjects for whites, and mission schools, which taught reading, writing and scripture for blacks and lower-class whites (Bickford-Smith 1995, 25). Because of their shared experiences under colonial rule and as a way for white South Africans to distinguish themselves from, and as superior to, this Creole population, it

became common in the nineteenth century to refer to them as coloureds (Bickford-Smith 1989, 51; Shell 1994, 54).[10]

Cultural life in the early Cape

The cultural diversity at the Cape created a creolisation unique to this part of South Africa. Both the Khoekhoe and the slaves were recognised as gifted musicians and were employed in slave orchestras as early as 1676.[11] They also performed for sailors and lower-class settlers in taverns, where they encountered their patrons' respective types of music, in particular Dutch songs. Martin (1999, 61) contends that there were military bands that played European dances such as waltzes and quadrilles, street processions and parades. These activities, together with the staging of mummeries by soldiers, added to the vibrancy of cultural life at the Cape.[12] By the 1820s, there already existed a unique creolised culture at the Cape that was translocal – illustrating the diversity of cultures from various locales on the continents of Africa, Europe and Asia – in its inception by virtue of the diversity of peoples who imbued the culture with their inherited local expressions. Bird (1823, 166) evocatively described the street culture in 1822:

> The grand display is in the outskirts of town, to which the black population rush, on a Sunday… and go through their various awkward movements in quick or slow time, according to the taste of the dancers. The Sunday dance is accompanied by native music of every description. The slave boys from Madagascar and Mosambique [sic] bring the stringed instruments of their respective tribes and nation, from which they force sounds, which they regard as melodious. The love of dancing is a ruling passion throughout the Cape of every population in every rank; but music, though a pursuit favoured by a small part of the society, is here a passion with the negro alone.

A lack of musical and theatrical space and consequently concerts and theatrical representations allowed for a "culture of the street" to flourish (Martin 1999, 61). This street culture was especially marked by the slaves and ex-slaves on two dates: January second – Tweede Nuwejaar (second day of the New Year) being the annual slave holiday – and December first – the date that marks the abolition of slavery at the Cape in 1838. Both were celebrations of freedom for the slaves or ex-slaves, which later became mere public holidays, devoid of their earlier social significance. Although the December date was somewhat forgotten in the twentieth century until the 1990s,[13] January celebrations had extended to 3 January up until the 1980s. Currently the festive season continues to be marked by a range of musical events around the Christmas holiday period.

Coloured identity

Coloured social identity is highly contested. Addressing their marginal status early in the "new South Africa", President Nelson Mandela suggested at the opening of a conference held by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) in August 1995, "Perhaps the most pressing concern is the fear of being marginalised. If left unattended, this fear could undermine the very foundation of our non-racial democracy that we all have struggled to achieve" (James, Caliguire and Cullinan 1996, 8). The concern of the conference was the (lack of) participation of the overwhelmingly coloured communities in the Western Cape in nation building at that crucial stage of the country's development. The conclusion to the pre-conference workshops was equally foreboding:

> The resulting middle ground, which became home for the various coloured communities, which were neither black nor white, has become a place where uncertainty and ambiguity dwells. During this transition to democracy, it is a place that seems to be more unstable than before as its inhabitants try to navigate through a crisis of identity fraught with threats of racial polarisation. It is a place that also seems to be shrinking as some of its existing residents feel they are losing ground in the new democratic order. (Caliguire 1996, 15)

The Government of National Unity (1994–1996) was particularly mindful of the enormity of the task of forging national unity, as reflected in South Africa's motto: "Unity in Diversity". This recognition of the fragility of the new democracy by not acknowledging the sociopolitical particularities of marginalised communities was part of Madiba's[14] "magic", but has fallen off the radar of the current political elite. For many working-class and lower middle-class coloureds, the marginal status they endured under apartheid and the previous segregationist governments is still eminently present in their daily lives. Although other social problems such as crime, gang warfare, administrative corruption, xenophobia and the conflicts within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party have perhaps superseded issues of sociopolitical marginalisation, it remains an undercurrent of present-day South African life and, at times, becomes a focal point for community cohesion. Their cultural practices are also imbued with cohesive properties and, at certain times of the year, play a role in revitalising these communities.

The racialised designation for people of mixed descent emerged after slavery was abolished. Shell (1994, xxv) claims that "[b]y the time of full emancipation in 1838, a distinctive, complex, highly segmented and stratified society had emerged." Because of the preferential treatment of slave women at the Cape – they performed domestic tasks and lived in their owners' homes – they were more likely to be freed before emancipation than their male counterparts, and many married Europeans once

manumitted.[15] Many thus became the mothers of settlers and slave owners (Shell 1994, xxxviii). This racial ambiguity, along with the severe economic depression in the 1880s (Pearce 1985, 7), in which the working classes, both white and Creole, were plunged into ever worsening social conditions, often sharing living spaces, were reasons why the white middle class sought a means of differentiating the white underclass from the Creole underclass.

The Creole population was a heterogeneous group in terms of socioeconomic status, language and religion. Although the majority – a legacy of slave socioeconomic relations – worked as field hands and domestic workers and, by the early twentieth century, as factory workers, a tiny but slowly growing educated middle class emerged, comprising small entrepreneurs and artisans. By the mid-twentieth century, this group formed part of a professional social stratum of teachers, ministers, lawyers, doctors and nurses.

Language diversities, religious differences and gender

Diversity amongst coloured people also manifested itself through language: in a general sense, the working class spoke Afrikaans (a Creole Dutch), while the middle class spoke English and aspired to the values and norms of English society. Such middle-class ideals of assimilation into the dominant English society since the mid-nineteenth century were stimulated by a desire for citizenship rights and for acceptance within middle-class society. Adhikari (2005, 69) comments, "They regarded English bourgeois society as the apotheosis of 'civilization'… English enjoyed greater prestige within the Coloured community because it was an international language with a rich literature and was identified as the language of 'culture', 'civilization', and 'progress'." Englishness thus was the key to social and occupational advancement (Adhikari 2005, 69). English was also recognised as the language of British liberalism and racial tolerance (erstwhile liberators of the slaves), as opposed to Cape Dutch, (or later Afrikaans), which was associated with the racism and political intransigence of the ruling Afrikaner. Although this situation has changed since the democratic elections in 1994 with a new (black) elite class in power, there is still a tendency amongst working-class coloured Capetonians to associate the speaking of English with education and middle-class sophistication.

Religion, accompanied by an undercurrent of animosity towards other religious groupings, is another marker of difference amongst coloured people. This differentiation goes back to 1652 when the European settler groups brought Christianity to the Cape Colony, and to 1653, when certain slaves came from areas in Southeast Asia where the practice of Islam was prevalent. In those early years, religion, not race, was used initially to divide people. The Protestant colonists expediently did

not insist that their slaves convert to Christianity, as the Catholics did in other parts of the colonial world. Conversion to Christianity and Reformed baptism would have initiated assimilation and the promise of freedom by the Dutch Reformed Church. Robert Shell (1994, 332) sheds light on this contention around baptism:

> Reformed baptism, in Christian Europe before the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, was perceived as analogous to legal enfranchisement. Baptism was necessary for the right to inherit, the right to marry, the right to be buried in a Christian graveyard, and the right to bear witness. The Reformed rite of baptism, quite discretely from its ostensible purpose as a signifier of incorporation into the Church, also imbued the baptismal candidate with secular civil and legal advantages within the Christian society. By being denied the right to baptism in South Africa, most slaves were systematically excluded from the Christian community. Most slave owners distanced themselves from evangelical duties and Reformed piety; many slaves turned to Islam. As a result, there arose a distinct, colonywide polarity between the Christian settlers and the "heathen" slaves and autochthonous people. The issue of Reformed baptism thus became the linchpin in the complex identities of owners, slaves, and native people.

According to Shell (1994, xlii), Christian identity became "exclusionary and highly gendered"; female slaves, who were closer to their owners, typically followed the household religion while their male counterparts converted to Islam.

I suggest that a perception on the part of Christian coloured people that Muslims are rather intransigent with regard to their religious practices has resulted in an underlying animosity that has the potential to divide the larger community.[16] Muslims have certain prescriptive practices around food and marriage: for example, in a marriage between a Christian and a Muslim, the Christian spouse is expected to embrace Islam; there is very little compromise. This animosity is not immediately obvious but can arise in tense social situations. I observed the following altercation between members of a Christmas band about the purchasing of instruments in which the bandmaster was not consulted, where he angrily burst out:

WW: No one respects me in the band, other people outside do!

XX: Stop talking about people outside, they are Muslims (referring to one of the *klopse* bands he was working with), not long ago you said you didn't like Muslims.

WW: Muslims are also people.

This is a typical dialogue concerning Muslims, but seems arbitrary, and does not make sense in the light of Christmas bands' general associations with Muslims. I witnessed, for example, a Malay choir and the same Christmas band both performing

at a concert I arranged at a conference held at the University of Cape Town. Members of the Christmas band who performed after the Malay choir found themselves seats in the gallery to watch the performance and congratulated them warmly, shaking their hands and slapping their backs afterwards, saying, "*Mooi, manne!*" ("Well done, guys!").

Usually, the members of both Christian and Muslim religious groupings are relatively tolerant of each other and as a community may express a common purpose, such as during the anti-apartheid struggle; or they can be involved in joint cultural activities, such as the three cultural practices, for which there is immense support across religious affiliations in lower-class coloured communities. During my fieldwork, I often witnessed that because people usually live in the same neighbourhoods, they display much warmth and admiration towards each other's cultural practices, despite negativities expressed occasionally. Besides, some Christmas band families have Muslim members – in-laws and grandchildren – who support the bands as ardently as the rest, as I discovered on the road marches. These are some of the contradictions characterising their relationship.

Ambiguous identity and government ambivalence

I now turn to an exploration of the notion of coloured identity that arises from the history outlined above as it pertains to my site of research. I explain and interpret some of the cultural and social aspirations and alignments Christmas bands embody and trace the external perceptions and the social engineering of these perceptions, which, in turn, have shaped contemporary perceptions of coloured identity.

The notion of a coloured identity was extremely fluid for many decades and only gained statutory fixity under the apartheid regime – 1948 to 1990 – when it was imposed upon people who were perceived to be of "mixed race". When the term coloured was used initially in the nineteenth century, it generally referred to all those who were not classified as European, as it did in the USA. It was also a category that people could transcend (Goldin 1987, xxvi; Jung 2000, 168). Like elsewhere in the colonial world, a pseudo-scientific understanding of race was applied to the local situation. There is no single definition and there was much ambiguity around the term "coloured", due in part to government ambivalence and ensuing administrative confusion.

Goldin (1987, xxvi) illustrates that the criteria used to define coloured people were not fixed but developed over time. Since 1904, the term "coloured" excluded Bantu-speaking people and its usage became restricted to roughly the same group of people to whom it has applied since the early twentieth century. The term "mixed race" asserts the notion of racial purity and early twentieth-century preoccupations

with social Darwinism and eugenics. Coloured stereotypes of racial inferiority and residual identity were entrenched in novels by Sarah Gertrude Millin such as *God's Stepchildren* (1924) and *The Dark River* (1928), which were deployed in National Party (white supremacist) thinking and later in their justifications for their policies of social engineering (Goldin 1987, xviii). Increasingly, the notion of racial immutability began to be applied to the South African "population groups" and arbitrary definitions of coloured, white, black and Indian were enshrined in the apartheid constitution.

"Coloured" was also used as a form of self-identification and in political organisations such as the Coloured People's Association and the Afrikaner (coloured) League after 1880. Although both were short-lived, they were instrumental in conceptualising "coloured" as a political category (Jung 2000, 169). A more important political organisation emerged after the South African War in 1902 in which the British defeated the two Boer Republics (Orange Free State and Transvaal). The South African War (formerly called the Boer War, from 1899–1902) was an imperialist advance on the Boer Republics primarily for control of the gold mines situated in the Transvaal Republic. The British government of the Cape Colony, where coloured people mostly lived, garnered their support for the war effort by promising them an extension of the limited coloured franchise[17] to the Boer Republics once they had won the war. Discrimination against coloured people in the interior Boer Republics, therefore, was used to justify the war, which gained tremendous coloured support. However, the coloured franchise was compromised at the negotiations around the Treaty of Vereeniging that ended the war, and coloured people feared that the prejudices of the interior would spread to the Cape Colony (Goldin 1987, 19–20; Lewis 1987, 15–16 and 19; Jung 2000, 169).[18]

The African People's Organisation (APO) emerged out of this political milieu in 1903 as an essentially coloured oppositional political organisation, even though it used the term African in its name. African was a term used increasingly to designate Bantu-speaking people. Around the same time, the outbreak of a cholera epidemic amongst Africans in the Cape initiated the residential segregation of black people. The conservative elite coloured leaders sought an exemption from residential segregation and other economic and social policies that were slowly beginning to encroach upon the daily lives of African people. The APO was established to protect the limited rights of coloured people and to demand that "civilized coloureds" be treated equally and given the same rights as whites (Lewis 1987, 20–24; Jung 2000, 169). The APO, not unlike their counterparts of the Harlem Renaissance in the United States (see Floyd 1990), promoted middle-class notions of western civilization and social elevation through education as prerequisites for social equality with whites (see Chapter 2). This assertion of a distinct coloured identity by the APO was a political strategy for self-preservation more than an understanding or acceptance of "coloured" as a

distinct social or even cultural grouping. According to Lewis (1987, 25), members of the organisation remained ambiguous about the existence of a coloured identity: certain members called for the adoption of an inclusive black identity while others (a minority) considered the possible material advantages of mobilising for an exclusive or ethnic identity. As Du Pré (1994, 18) puts it, "a 'Coloured' identity in the early 1900s was merely an escape from prejudice and economic impoverishment and a passport to employment and security." Due to their ideals of assimilation, much of the concerns and activism of the APO appealed to the coloured elite rather than the broader community. Unfortunately, the elitism of the APO, along with its tactically expedient policy of socially distancing coloured people from black Africans in its efforts to secure an improved sociopolitical position for coloured people equal to that of whites, has led to an animosity between black Africans and coloured people still rife today, particularly in the Western Cape.

There is ample evidence of the various governments' ambivalence towards coloured people as a separate sociopolitical and cultural grouping and the status of their political rights.[19] Afrikaner rhetoric about coloured people ranged from acceptance as cultural cousins to complete rejection. This ambivalence stemmed not only from a moral and ethical conflict but, perhaps more importantly, for the political parties it also revolved around gaining the coloured vote. JBM Herzog of the National Party, who became the prime minister in 1925, argued consistently from 1916 for the full franchise of coloured people in the Cape Province and its extension to the other provinces as well. His reasoning was that coloureds were not a "separate nation" and that "their culture, civilization, outlook on life and language were those of the European" (Du Pré 1994, 3). Afrikaner intellectuals JS Marais and NP van Wyk Louw endorsed this view in 1939 and 1960, respectively, as did the Theron Commission, which was appointed to look into the problems of coloured people in 1973. On the other hand, the Afrikaanse Studente Bond argued in 1971 that coloured people did not share a common heritage with whites (Du Pré 1994, 35). Clearly, the "coloured problem" was a significant one that often warranted deliberation and was fraught with contradictions.

What emerges from this ideological tug of war in the twentieth century, characterising the larger coloured community, are two "pulls": one towards assimilation – with its economic and cultural advantages but with the stigma of complicity; the other towards separation – with the space it allowed for resistance as apartheid's noose tightened. For those growing up in Cape Town at the height of the anti-apartheid struggle, the three parading practices were denigrated as falling into the apartheid ideology of racial separatism through their display of "coloured culture". In my interviews with many members of the Christmas bands, they did not seem to have been involved a great deal in the politics surrounding them. They also did not make much of an effort to remember those turbulent years, except for isolated years in

which their annual practices were affected, or having to apply for permits to parade in the areas declared white areas after the Group Areas Act of 1956 was enforced in the 1960s.[20] Their focus seemed to be entirely on their expressive practices, which took up much of their free time; the terrain of politics, perceived as perilous during those years of "total onslaught", was largely avoided. Besides, focusing on their expressive practices allowed them to shape their world within their own social framework of community spirit and collective participation.

Despite this contention around the population group, successive governments were unable to precisely define a coloured person. The National Party, which came into power in 1948, was particularly inept at providing workable definitions. The 1950 Population Registration Act was notoriously vague, defining coloureds as neither black nor white and as "persons who are, or who are generally accepted as, members of the race or class known as Cape Coloured" (cited in Goldin 1987, xxvi). In their attempt to construct this hybrid racial grouping that confounded their purist notions of race, the racist Nationalist government conducted dehumanising "scientific tests" in the 1950s and 1960s in which features such as the skull size, shape of nose, hair texture, blood condition and speech accent were used as determinants (Du Pré 1994, 17).

The most painful pronouncements on coloured identity are notions of a residual or confused identity. In 1983, Marike de Klerk, the then wife of the former president of South Africa, FW de Klerk, made the notorious blunder of saying that coloured people were "the leftovers… the people that were left after the nations were sorted out" ("What Marike de Klerk once had to say about other race groups", 1989). In similar vein, the candid statement by an African woman to a researcher in the mid-1990s is representative of many in South African society:

> Coloureds don't know where they come from. We know where we come from. Whites know where they come from. But these coloureds don't know whether they are black or white. Hence they feel so threatened. (quoted in Caliguire 1996, 11)

Even after the democratic elections in 1994, there remains contestation around the notion of coloured identity. I used the term Creole earlier as it would apply in other parts of the world where similar mixed communities exist, and as a neutral and less contested term. Some people identify very strongly with the term "coloured", whereas others find it highly offensive, a reminder of the imposed nomenclature of the years of colonial segregation and apartheid. Some of these issues are discussed in the next section, where I explore possible theoretical-methodological directions that emerged out of my field research.

Cultural hybridity

Discourses on cultural hybridity emphasise the violence of the colonial encounter, foregrounding racial and sexual matters through binary concepts of whiteness and blackness and the mixing of blood.[21] Historically, hybridity, like miscegenation, signalled racial impurity, moral degeneracy and shame to the racial purists who harboured notions of fixity regarding human origin. Consequently, hybrid identities were perceived to be contaminated, regressive, and failures in human evolution and social development. Postcolonial cultural hybridity theorists have transformed this negative term, steeped in biological purism and ethnic essentialism, into a positive sign of heterogeneity. This shift in emphasis ties in with postmodern notions of multiple subjectivities and pan identities shaped by international histories and struggles; for instance, the process of and struggle for decolonisation and the Pan-Africanist movement. The perceived threat of contamination provided the term hybridity with potential transgressive power, disrupting notions of binary opposition, ethnocentrism and narrow nationalism (see Papastergiadis 1997; Joseph 1999; Mabardi 2000; and Poupeney-Hart 2000).

Grunebaum and Robins (2001,169) present a trenchant critique of the postcolonial celebration of the notion of cultural hybridity, signifying "spaces of radical openness" and an "anti-essentialist politics of location." They warn that the romanticising of these in-between "third spaces" may be attractive to "progressive" intellectuals but that "ethnic absolutism… is likely to continue to appeal to cultural nationalists." The violent xenophobic attacks on non-national Africans in South Africa in May and June 2008 and April 2015 provide evidence of such "ethnic absolutism". While in South Africa the formation of the hybrid communities of the Western Cape is historically more complex than black/white racial or sexual encounters due to the varied origins of people at the Cape, the struggles around coloured identity have nevertheless often played themselves out within this racial binarism. Due to the preferential treatment of coloured people under the various segregationist governments, coloured people were precariously located within the white/black interstices, "less than white… but better than black" (Erasmus 2001b, 13). The vulnerability of their social position within the body politic has manifested itself through political ambivalence and marginality: their political ambivalence is evidenced in a history of vacillation at the polls,[22] while they have maintained a marginal status, politically, economically, socially and culturally. For coloured communities, the politics of location has been compounded by the fact that the struggle for national liberation has often assumed a racially polarised form.

Hybrid identities have certainly been imbued with feelings of shame (see February 1981; Wicomb 1998; Julius 2004; Adhikari 2006). However, notions of

respectability amongst the aspirant middle classes have counterbalanced this, through their participation in the church, political organisations such as the APO, or cultural organisations such as the Christmas bands and the Malay choirs. "Respectability and shame are key defining terms of middle class and coloured experience" and furthermore "the pressure to be respectable and to avoid shame created much anxiety" (Erasmus 2001b, 13).

Political organisations such as the APO and the Teacher's League of South Africa (TLSA)[23] cultivated a culture of respectability not dissimilar to the lower middle-class/respectable working-class cultural organisations such as the Christmas bands and Malay choirs. While the latter organisations manifest respectability outwardly through smart uniform dress, discipline and order (see Chapters 2 and 5), political organisations were conspicuous in their promotion of the English language and an educated elite. Sandwith (2005, 8) observes of the TLSA that their middle-class status was noticeably displayed in their exaggerated "adoption of middle class manners and tastes," while their meetings were occasions for important public displays of sophistication. Similarly, the APO's annual conferences were "models of decorum and respectability" to which they invited the mayor of the town to open the conference and other sympathetic white political celebrities to address the delegates (Lewis 1987, 39).

Similar intentions existed with the formation of the Eoan Group, a cultural organisation for coloured people founded in 1933 by Helen Southern-Holt:

> My first desire in giving help to the Coloured community was to start classes for clear, articulate speech. Having had to engage Coloured workers as well as European, I knew from experience that the mass of Coloured boys and girls entering the labour market were ill-equipped, and had not the power of the spoken word to aid them.[24]

Interestingly, while these organisations (working class and middle class) appealed to completely different constituencies, they were established and operational at the same historical time, performing similar value-laden social functions.

Emerging themes

Three themes intersect in this work and are interwoven throughout the chapters – subjectivity, respectability and gender. I have found the concept "hybrid" as a discursive category limited in its usefulness to my research, as it is dependent on fixed categories of race, and does not address the complexities of race relations and identity formation of the research community with which I worked. The discourse of creolisation has been considered worthwhile by certain academics researching the same cultural histories of similar communities in South Africa (Shell 1994;

Martin 2013; Erasmus 2001). While hybridity is rooted in biologism, creolisation is rooted in language and culture. Martin (2013) has made an extensive argument for its consideration in researching the musics of the Western Cape and even the rest of South Africa. Many Caribbean theorists argue that the term is a productive one when considering the specific Creole societies that emerged under conditions of colonialism around the plantation-slavery complex and they are less convinced of its usage when it becomes diffused in order to comprehend our globalising world (see Munasinghe 2006). Glissant (2005, 229–230 quoted in Martin 2013, 62) states that "the world is creolising, it is not becoming creole." In the extract quoted by Martin, Glissant makes an interesting distinction between the general process of creolisation affecting the world and the specifics of Creolism affecting groups that emerged under particular historical conditions. However, I contend that if the world in general is creolising, then the term becomes less productive as a discursive category.

The notion of subjectivity has been more useful as a theoretical lens through which to view the Christmas Bands Movement, particularly as the concerns raised in many of the interviews were around notions of subjectivity, as I shall show in later chapters. Briefly, the modern notion of subjectivity entered the literature in humanities disciplines such as anthropology and ethnomusicology as one associated with the western, usually white, male educated researcher, who sought to enlighten himself about a (usually) remote culture and its people, the non-white, non-literate objectified "other". There is an inherent dualism in this construction of self/other, subject/object, which the feminists explore, following the seminal work of Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1972), in which she states that woman is constructed as man's "other". The notion of the subject and subjectivity therefore historically resided within the white male – the "essential subjectivity" (Atkins 2005, 238) – while "others" were inessential and objectified. Subjects could act, were empowered and had agency. Objects were passive, silent, spoken for and powerless. Moreover, anthropology's cultural concept of the self historically not only denies the agency of the self, but also analyses only the collective self. Thus, according to Sökefeld (1999, 428) "the analysis of cultural concepts of the self only apparently gives attention to the individual human being in studying its 'collective representations'."

However, a considerable genealogy of the notion of subjectivity in philosophy can be traced from Descartes through to the phenomenologists, poststructuralists and feminists. Kim Atkins' work (2005) has been particularly informative in this regard. As she shows, René Descartes was responsible for the centrality of subjectivity. As epitomised in his famous edict "I think, therefore I am," the Cartesian subject comprises a duality of mind/body: an unquestionable "I" and (possibly) a body (Atkins 2005, 7–8). "I" exists as a thinking being, which therefore confers onto the notion of subjectivity the realm of the inner being. Friedrich Nietzsche decentred

subjectivity by debunking the Cartesian duality of the subject. For Nietzsche, the mind/body distinction is a linguistic strategy used to refer to different aspects of the self, rather than denoting discrete entities. For Nietzsche, the self (consciousness) is constituted of both the living body and instinctual urges that are both creative and destructive and have a transformative energy. The unity of the subject is therefore achieved through the adoption of an "embodied view of subjectivity" (Atkins 2005, 71–72). This notion of embodied subjectivity was, in turn, particularly useful for Michel Foucault and feminists such as Judith Butler.

Michel Foucault explored the poststructural notion of subjectivity as fragmentary, processual, multiple and socially constructed in relation to the idea of discourse. For Foucault, subjectivity is thus a discursive formation. He is also interested in the ways that notions of "truth intersect with structures of power to articulate forms of human subjectivity" (Atkins 2005, 206). His work is influenced by Nietzsche's genealogical method, particularly his "organic conception of power, and the view that ethical life is concerned with an aesthetic of the self" (Atkins 2005, 206). This ethical/aesthetical concern, which he also refers to as "moral agency", is developed through the notion of "care of the self" in his article "Technologies of the Self" (Foucault 2003c in Rabinow and Rose 2003, 145–179). Foucault, in turn, has influenced feminist thinking, particularly the idea of embodied subjectivity and its social construction.

In his extensive work on social institutions such as prisons, mental asylums, hospitals, schools and the military, Foucault's underlying concern is with individual subjectivity; how ideas about truth, knowledge, power, technology, discourse and practice shape the ways in which subjects constitute themselves (McLaren 2002; Rabinow and Rose 2003). He is particularly interested in how these institutions manufacture what he calls "normalizing practices" or "disciplinary practices" to produce "docile bodies" (Foucault 1977), or what Atkins (2005, 207) refers to as "conformist and cooperative subjects." I am interested in how discourses around knowledge, truth and practice are engaged in the Christmas Bands Movement.

Judith Butler applies Nietzsche's idea of embodied subjectivity and Foucault's argument that the subject constitutes itself through discourse to her work on gender identity. For her, identity is "performative", and it is through performativity that gendered subjectivities are formed, through repetitious acts that inscribe social norms on the body (Atkins 2005, 252). "This repetition is at once the reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation"; gender is thus not a "stable identity" but the "effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler 1990, 140). I explore these ideas on performativity and the constitution of gender in

repetitive acts in Chapter 6, where I investigate the role of women in the Christmas bands.

A postcolonial critique of subjectivity posited by Paul Zeleza (2005, 17–18) argues that postmodernism's decentring or "death of the subject" raises questions "as to why the subject becomes problematic just when women and others who have been silenced begin to act as subjects rather than objects of history." Sökefeld (1999, 430) echoes this view, questioning why anthropologists are "beginning to argue for the importance of the self of their non-Western subjects… now that the self and subject in the West have been seriously challenged."

With this caveat in mind, I define subjectivity as the subjective experiences, both individually and collectively, of a particular group that is different from any other; e.g. male subjectivities. These experiences can be gendered or racialised or both; e.g. coloured male. These include the feelings, thoughts and an understanding of oneself in the world as well as particular perceptions, interpretations of and relations to the world. Subjectivity is thus historically and socially constructed. Subjectivity is also relationally produced through collective experience.

The notion of subjectivity interests me for several reasons. I am interested in the way that members of the Christmas bands constitute themselves as individuals and as collectives; in how the practice inadvertently gives attention to the body, historically (in their case) male bodies; and how the relatively recent (since the1990s) acceptance of women in the Christmas bands disrupts and destabilises the gendered perception of the bands. I am thus interested in the changing gender relations within the bands and the perception of the practice since women have entered as performers and are no longer merely supportive. I explore the notion of embodied subjectivity, embedded within Foucault's notion of "technologies of the self", with regard to prominent individuals within the Christmas bands. Furthermore, I develop the idea of the Christmas Bands Movement as a social institution that constructs its own "normalising practices" to produce "disciplined bodies".

A second theoretical idea I found to be very useful as a thematic link in my analysis and interpretation of this cultural practice was that of respectability. The notion of respectability is highly prized in certain coloured communities in the Western Cape (see Lewis 1987; Badham 1988; Bickford-Smith 1995; Ross 1999; Erasmus 2001a; and Salo 2004). The engagement with the politics of respectability is not unique to this South African case. Indeed, this notion has been significant for similarly racially oppressed, former enslaved and/or Creole groupings in the Americas, and has been particularly noted in the case of African Americans in the United States, where there is a growing literature on the subject (Griffin 2000). African-American feminists, in particular, have explored this notion of respectability in the larger community through their readings (and the influence) of "race men"[25] like

W.E.B du Bois. Just like the politics of respectability in the United States emerged to counter negative stereotypes in popular culture (Griffin 2000, 34), the notion of respectability in the Western Cape emerged to counter unfavourable stereotypes of the uneducated, disreputable, inebriated coloured menial farm labourer (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless, the politics of respectability within the context of the Christmas bands is gendered in very particular ways, as I shall show in various chapters. The question then arises why these oppressed groups would concede to dominant prescribed social values such as respectability rather than oppose or subvert them. Evidence of cases of such opposition, rather than to subscribing to (Eurocentric) middle-class notions of respectability, are English-speaking Caribbean working-class men's recourse to reputation (Wilson 1969) and Afro-Caribbean women's recourse to self-respect (Green 2006). Yet in his monograph, *Slim's Table*, on the daily lunchtime habits of a group of working-class African-American men from Chicago, Mitchell Duneier (1992, 65) defines a working-class notion of respectability as "a mode of life conforming to and embodying notions of moral worth [which] has great significance for them." Likewise, the members of the Christmas bands subscribe to notions of moral worth, which I describe in Chapter 2, that are not necessarily influenced by middle-class sensibilities but have been constructed discursively through their cultural practice as "normalising practices". I contend that in certain cultural practices respectability has strong implications for enacting citizenship. The notion of citizenship is particularly significant because of the historical marginalisation of coloured communities for whom inclusion into the nation state was an issue fraught with problems.

Thirdly, gender is an undercurrent throughout this monograph. Christmas bands, as a community practice, started out as a males-only tradition and hence set the standard for masculine behaviour within the practice and for its male membership in general. Many of the "disciplinary practices" valued within the Christmas Bands Movement were adopted from military dress and gestures, another masculine institution, and like most other institutions, the Christmas Bands Movement had its own gender regime (Morrell 1998, 609). Thus, performance spaces were unavailable to women in the bands, similar to their counterparts in the ANC historically, where "despite black women's initiatives… male-dominated political spaces were closed to them" (Erlank 2003, 654). Besides, with the strong connection between masculinity and the military (Cock 1989 and 1994), which influenced the practice significantly, more favourable incorporation of women into the organisation would have required a considerable amount of reconfiguring. Women's place in the organisation was thus relegated to the naturalised role of carer and nurturer, and performing activities relating to the domicile, as I show in Chapter 6.

Nevertheless, in the Christmas bands the cultural ideal of the "real man" is a complex of strong positive characteristics (of a "military man") mixed with the humour of self-deprecation and a quality of teasing and belittling others. While they seemingly aspire towards the normative hegemonic masculinity through the display of militarism, there is also a certain element of play and undermining of it, which might present a more balanced view of their subjective conditions. As subordinate masculinities, they were certainly excluded from the privilege and power of hegemonic masculinity in colonial and apartheid South Africa. I explore the connection between masculinity and the military in Chapter 5.

Why Christmas bands?

Public performing arts are key activities for representing and shaping social identities. As social activities, music and dance have been at the centre of coloured community life as documented for over a century in the local newspapers. Important styles that serve as emblems and unifiers of sections of the coloured community include *langarm* (social ballroom) dances, "jazz" dancing, Cape jazz (music), Christmas bands, Malay choirs and the Minstrel Carnival. Despite the political changes since the democratic elections of 1994 that have irrevocably altered the political landscape of South Africa, certain sectors of the coloured community still feel politically and culturally marginalised in the new South Africa. Their cultural practices have largely been neglected in scholarly work, except for the Minstrel Carnival (Stone 1971; Jeppie 1990; Baxter 1996; Martin 1999;) and Malay music (Du Plessis 1935 and 1972; Davids 1985; Desai 1985 and 1993;). The focus on the Christmas bands in this monograph highlights a cultural practice with very little exposure historically.

My research is based on the premise that music and dance create a sense of belonging and group consciousness in this exceptionally diverse community. Certain cultural practices, particularly the music and dance styles mentioned above, are viewed as unique to the coloured community by other South Africans, and coloured people, specifically those belonging to lower socioeconomic classes, pride themselves on this cultural difference. These practices are particularly important to them at significant annual and lifecycle events that are focal points for community maintenance and revitalisation. Moreover, these practices appear to have gained in importance for creating community, identity and solidarity amongst the lower socioeconomic classes in the post-apartheid era.

Christmas bands, which for decades consisted of men only, are medium to large social organisations that march in the communities during the Christmas season, accompanied by wind and string instruments playing Christmas carols and hymns. In this annual ritual, which includes visiting families of band members, the sick and the aged, and the sharing of a *tafel*, members renew and affirm friendships. From

February to April, they participate in Christmas band competitions in which three broad categories are adjudicated: the "solo", a prescribed piece, the "best-dressed band", and the "grand march past".

There are about 80 bands in the Western Cape province, each made up of about 40 to 200 members. Although they operate throughout the year, they are principally visible in their communities during the summer months from December through April when they are integrally involved in two performance arenas: the road marches and the competitions. They often volunteer musical items at community and religious events and lifecycle celebrations of their (especially elderly) members and supporters.

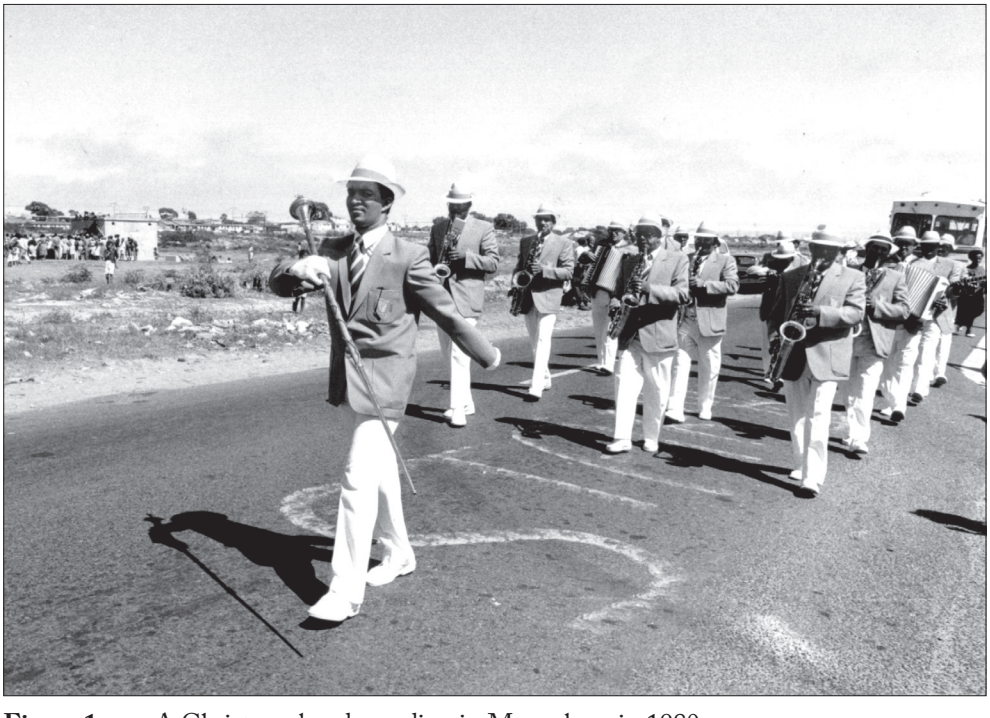


Figure 1 A Christmas band parading in Manenberg in 1980.

I decided to focus my research on the Christmas bands because they were the least documented, both in scholarly literature and in the local media, despite their formal existence for almost a century and informally since the mid-1800s. I would like to suggest that this lack of documentation can be attributed to the fact that the coloured population has been a partially urban-based community with a cosmopolitan outlook culturally not much different from the settler European community. Their practices are cosmopolitan in the sense that similar urban community cultural practices can be found in various places around the world. I use the term cosmopolitan as defined by

Turino (2000, 7) in reference to "objects, ideas and cultural positions that are widely diffused throughout the world and yet are specific only to certain portions of the population within given countries." He adds that cosmopolitanism is "realized in specific locations and in the lives of actual people. It is thus always localized and will be shaped by and somewhat distinct in each locale" (Turino 2000, 7). For this reason, similar but different expressive practices involving music (especially wind bands) and associated with Christmas celebrations can be found in places like Trinidad (Martin 1988), England (Finnegan 1989), Brazil (Reily 2002) and the former Yugoslavia (personal communication with Obrad Budic).

Unlike other ethnic groups and cultural practices in South Africa that fit the anthropological descriptor of exotic people and culture, coloured cultural practices, except for the Minstrel Carnival and the Malay choirs, were overlooked, I suggest, for another reason: they were seen as poor imitations of European musical practices, and therefore not interesting enough for academic or scholarly pursuit. Yet coloured people managed to adapt certain foreign cultural practices to suit local conditions, thereby creating unique practices.

Fieldwork and methodology

This monograph is based on my PhD research for which I used the St Joseph's Christmas Band (hereafter St Joseph's) as a case study to investigate the activities of the Christmas Bands Movement. I was involved as a participant-observer for many years, two of which were quite intensive during the parade season (December to April), as I became involved with the preparations for the annual competitions and road marches. I attended at least four sessions per week; two (musical) band rehearsals[26] for the "solo" during the week, entire band practices of both the marching and the music on Saturdays, and the road marches on Sundays. During the rest of the year, I attended fortnightly Sunday meetings/practices and sporadic activities of the band when they occurred. Early on in my fieldwork, the band members heard that I was a lecturer at the prestigious South African College of Music at the University of Cape Town[27] and insisted on involving me as an assistant bandmaster to direct the musical band at rehearsals and to conduct them at the competitions. Although this was not part of my fieldwork agenda, as a member of the band I could not refuse to use my talent for the upliftment of the band – every member was charged with the responsibility of assisting the band to the best of her or his abilities. In my position as conductor of the band, I took almost complete control of the musical interpretation of the pieces performed at the annual competitions. I felt that it was important to have the characteristic stamp of the (now late) bandmaster, Wally Witbooi, on the performance and always left the arrangement of the pieces to him. My involvement as

the conductor of the band was significant, as I became roped into more of the band's organisation, and I had to resist being too involved in decision-making on matters other than musical. In this position, it was expected of me to reinforce discipline during performances and practices at the clubhouse.

My participation in St Joseph's activities was thus rather significant and beyond that of anthropologists who ordinarily participate in some way in the quotidian life of the researched group. This kind of participation, where performance is used as a research tool, is not unusual for ethnomusicologists (see Barz 2003, 24). Since we often bring with us extensive musical knowledge and skills to the field, we are roped into significant positions, even as repositories (see Shelemay 1996).

Conflicts between my roles as researcher, member of the band and musical director manifested themselves quite early on in my fieldwork. Mostly, I felt that my prominent position detracted from the crucial aspect of observation in the classic anthropological field research methodology of participant-observer. There was often almost too much participation with very little detached observation. Although this allowed for a deep involvement with my research community, it was often physically exhausting, along with a new full-time teaching post that left me with very little mental energy for reflection. I thus found myself having to reassert objective distance by cutting down on responsibilities, attending only general meetings – and not practices – during the year, not attending some of the events, and finally staying away for a length of time so that I could write objectively. In fact, reviewers of my early articles often seriously doubted my ability to be objective if I was so involved with my research community, as if "scientific objectivity" can only be executed in clinical laboratory situations. Researching humans is always going to be challenging; it is even more so for native ethnographers. In their Introduction to the volume *Displacement, diaspora, and geographies of identity*, Smadar and Swedenburg (1996, 20) suggest that for native ethnographers, "field and home blur and the sites of research… and the sites of writing… intermingle." Being involved in this kind of research "requires an ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of positionalities rather than a one-time journey into a faraway wilderness."

Other conflicts that emerged involved certain youth members who did not always respond well to rigorous practice sessions. Since the band performed well under my direction, after struggling somewhat to maintain their unbeaten "solo" performance record in the competitions, I was perceived as musically responsible for the salvation of the band, which meant that the older members were very appreciative of my expertise and fully supported me in cases of conflict. These were usually resolved within the practice sessions, although they could simmer on for a while. This made me feel rather awkward with the young members involved and their families. Problems in the band were usually discussed inside the clubhouse and not "carried out into the

streets". Although this was insisted upon, it did not always end up this way. In my case, even when practices were very tense, we always left by shaking hands and on return at the next practice similarly greeted each other with a handshake.

Greeting with the handshake is an important gesture of acknowledgement and respect and, along with colourful uniforms and spirited march tunes, seems emblematic of the Christmas bands. Although most members of Christian denominations greet like this, it was the first time I saw little children adopt the habit. The older men insist upon this convention and often remind teenage boys who veer away from these practices that this is the preferred way of greeting. In instances of conflict with the youth, their shaking my hand after a tense rehearsal indicated that things were fine between us, that my authority was ultimately respected.

Several other issues in my research as an insider researcher emerged and influenced my investigations. First, classic anthropological fieldwork involving participant-observation is usually set within defined limits of a one-year or two-year stay. The researcher then leaves, perhaps never to return to the field site, and writes up a definitive ethnography based on her or his field experiences using theoretical frameworks canonised by the university academy. In my situation, I intended to stay for a two-year period, which was then extended due to job considerations. It is not easy for a member of a Christmas band to leave the organisation. This is done only in extreme conditions of dissatisfaction with the band. If one wants to leave the band, one must state this in writing and request a severance card, without which a member cannot leave one band for another. In this way, members are made accountable and loyal to a particular band, as the severance application also acts as a deterrent for willy-nilly membership. Members sometimes stay away for long periods or leave after a tiff without formal notification and never apply for the severance card. The belief is that these members will probably return some day or, as a founder member of St Joseph's stated to me rather confidently during a meeting where this matter emerged, "they need the band more than the band needs them."

Second, there is always an undercurrent of rivalry among the bands, even though members of the different bands seem to get along very well and have known each other for many years. When I first met a gathering of Christmas bands at a parade in the city, it felt like I was visiting a large family gathering. However, when I suggested to my main field consultant, Mr Hannes September, that I was thinking of working with another band to get a sense of how other bands operated, he questioned what it was that they could teach me that he could not. When I playfully threatened to resign from St Joseph's and join another, his return threat was that they would never give me a severance card. Later, I skilfully negotiated my involvement with other bands in a general meeting in which I had to agree that my work with other bands would be merely observational and not involve musical direction.

Third, another issue that emerged was that as a Capetonian, designated coloured, like the research community I investigated, there were hardly any linguistic, cultural, national or phenotypical differences between us. I easily slotted in as a regular band member, despite class and educational differences. In fact, I slotted in so well the first few months in which I participated fully in the events of the band that when I decided to step back and do more observation, this was hardly appreciated by the members. Although their disapproval came in the form of jibes and teasing, I was always aware that I was stepping out of the routine for members and presenting the band with certain challenges that they had not faced before. One of these challenges occurred repeatedly during my second parade season with the band over the 2004–2005 festive season. The parades (discussed under the heading "The road marches" in Chapter 2) happen during the hottest months of the year, when marching for hours in full uniform and blowing an instrument can be somewhat uncomfortable and quite challenging. As these road marches make for rich visual material, I acquired a digital video camera and spent many Sunday afternoons taking visual images of the band. Having discarded my jacket and tie, I was a lot cooler than my fellow band members and not as restricted by the marching file. Certain band members commented that I had a great excuse for getting out of the road march, and Jonathan Tookley urged me to "put down your camera and pick up your instrument!" While a lot of this was in jest, I realised that I was taking liberties that were unavailable to them. No matter how uncomfortable it became for them, they had to continue through the hot afternoon until the parade was officially over for the day.

Comparative study

I discovered as I tried to research other bands that my prominent membership with St Joseph's might have already had implications for extending my study anyway. This prominence was in part because of my lectureship at the South African College of Music and in part my leadership role musically in St Joseph's, a band revered for its past musical prowess. I perceived a certain unease with some bands when I visited them at rehearsals, probably because it was unusual to have a stranger in their midst, often introduced as a member of another band who was there to study them. I generally kept a low profile, taking notes and speaking to one or two members when they were not too involved in the rehearsal. Other bands were very happy to have me participate and improve their musical standards, which I avoided by insisting that I had come to study how they operated. Instead of another in-depth study as I had hoped, I visited several clubhouses where bands were practising for the competitions and interviewed some of their members who were quite willing to answer questions. To gain a deeper understanding of the workings of the entire Christmas Bands

Movement, I made myself available as one of St Joseph's band delegates to the monthly meetings of the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union, an umbrella structure made up of Christmas bands. In this capacity, I could also attend meetings of the South African United Christmas Bands Board, a federal structure comprising various Christmas Bands Unions. In this way, I became more acquainted with the operations of the entire Christmas Bands Movement and also met others I could work with or interview at a later stage. In sum, my long association with the bands, and especially with St Joseph's, – longer than a conventional period of fieldwork – allowed me to share a particular history with the bands, and contributed to an in-depth knowledge of the movement. I have documented this history visually with both still and video digital cameras, frequently at the competitions and road marches where the spectacular display of their expressive practice is most evident.

Outline

Building on the history of coloured people in the Cape outlined earlier, I present a history of the Christmas Bands Movement in Chapter 2, gleaned through my involvement as participant-observer, through interviews as well as through investigating historical materials of the Christmas bands. I also explore the notion of respectability through its historical underpinnings, because it has significance for coloured communities and is an underlying theme in the historiography of communities of the Western Cape.

In Chapter 3, I use St Joseph's as a case study to investigate the notion of embodied subjectivity through a historical sketch of the band and biographical sketches of the members. Chapter 4 investigates musical and cultural transmission in the bands, introducing the other bands and prominent members whom I interviewed. This chapter also includes comparative studies of other bands, where I was just an observer, and St Joseph's, where I was a participant-member and integrally involved.

Chapter 5 presents a detailed study of the annual competitions of the Christmas Bands Movement. I investigate the symbolic meanings of their adoption of military routines and gestures in their expressive practice, arguing that through the element of play they actually parody militarism, localising and familiarising it for the Christmas band community. In Chapter 6, I explore the role of women in the Christmas bands and their (until recently) hidden status, using Judith Butler's notion of "performativity" to discuss how the historically gendered perception of the bands has been disrupted through the insistence of women to be accepted as performers rather than behind-the-scenes supporters. As the position of women in South Africa, particularly that of black working-class women, is an extremely vulnerable one, I locate the women of the Christmas bands within the current gender politics in the context of the "new

South Africa". Nevertheless, as indicated earlier, gender is another underlying theme interlaced throughout the monograph. Chapter 7 presents my concluding thoughts on my findings.

Notes

1 The word "coloured" (an imposed racialised designation for people of mixed descent) is problematised in the section titled "Coloured identity" (page 6).

2 The practitioners themselves refer to these three cultural practices as disciplines.

3 On New Year's Eve, the Malay choirs, now referred to as *Nagtroepe* (night troupes), parade in the city centre in dull-coloured tracksuits. They parade and "dance" in a similar manner to the *klopse*, singing *moppies* (comic songs) along designated streets, ending in front of a community hall in Rose Street, *Bo-Kaap* (literally above the Cape), a historical Muslim neighbourhood on the slopes of Signal Hill above the city of Cape Town. At this venue, they sing the 200- to 300-year-old *Nederlandsliedjies* (Dutch songs) with suitable reverence. The *klopse* have historically paraded in the city centre on the second day of New Year, the annual slave holiday in the Cape under Dutch rule.

4 The Dutch occupied the Cape from 1652 until 1805 and it was a British colony from 1806 until 1960, although the South African Parliament was established in 1910.

5 Strong winds took him off course, preventing Dias from reaching the southernmost tip of Africa, and he named it the "Cape of Storms", but later King John II of Portugal renamed it "Cape of Good Hope" (South Africa History Online 2015). See more at: http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/bartholomew-dias-portuguese-discoverer-cape-good-hope-drowns-sea#sthash.SAjks8hd.dpuf.

6 The Khoekhoe, also spelt Khoikhoi and referred to as Hottentot by the colonists, were the autochthonous inhabitants of the southwestern parts of southern Africa. They were protected from being enslaved by the rule in the Cape that "neither a European nor a native person could be enslaved" (Shell 1997, xxxvii).

7 Large numbers of "prize slaves" captured by the British navy were introduced into the Cape Colony from the first British occupation in 1795 until 1807 when the British banned the slave trade. "Prize negroes" continued to arrive at the Cape for at least a decade after the ban was implemented (Saunders 1994, 100, 102).

8 I use the term here prematurely in a sense, since at this historical juncture the descriptor was not used to differentiate these groupings from the white population.

9 Bickford-Smith (1989, 47) asserts that the "*de facto* segregation" that was implemented in institutions such as schools and churches merely replaced the "vertical relationship of white over black, characteristic of Cape slavery."

10 "By the nineteenth century, race was decisively folded into the social order when the word *colored* was applied by self-styled whites to the descendants of slaves" (Shell 1997, xxxv).

11 Coloured activists in the anti-apartheid movement have read this recognition as the paternalism of whites who were comforted by benign, happy, musical coloured people.

12 Interestingly, the New Year's Day Mummers' Parade in Philadelphia, which is very similar in many respects to the *Klopse Karnaval* or Minstrel Carnival, is said to be the oldest folk parade in the US but is equally marginalised in the cultural landscape of the country. It is a rather racially contentious parade and often makes it into the media for this reason alone (see Tessler 2010 and "Philadelphia mummers parade officials denounce acts of 'hate and bigotry'", 2016).

13 During the anti-apartheid struggle, people of colour joined forces against a common enemy. Once the political organisations and banned leaders were freed in the early 1990s, the subsequent openness in the society allowed people the freedom to search for their ethnic roots and self-identify. Consequently, some coloured people actively rediscovered their slave roots and culture.

14 "Madiba" is a title of respect and affection for Nelson Mandela; it is derived from his Xhosa clan name.

15 There was a severe imbalance in the sex ratios, which remained until the late-nineteenth century: there were many more men than women in both the slave and free populations (Shell 1997, xxxvii).

16 This perception was gained through my lived experience growing up in Cape Town. Sometimes, Christian coloured people express colonial stereotypical notions of the Muslim running amok (Bickford-Smith, Van Heynigen and Worden 1999, 83). For instance, when there is any social upheaval during the annual parades, the Muslims will be blamed, as in a commonly expressed phrase, "you know what the Muslims are like!"

17 The franchise was granted in 1892 to coloured males who had a certain level of education and income or owned property (Du Pre 1994, 280).

18 Delegates from the other British colony, Natal, along with those from the Boer Republics, insisted on the total exclusion of non-whites from the franchise in the Union. The compromise they reached was that the status quo with regard to the coloured franchise should remain in the different provinces. Natal, though, would not include any new non-white voters on the voters' roll (Du Pre 1994, 48, 275). Union, then, was essentially about white unity and nationalism.

19 A quick probe into the early coloured franchise gives one a fair idea of the statutory ambivalence. Although there was no colour distinction in the early Cape, the political rights of coloured people were often precarious. Once the slaves were officially free, the Masters and Service Ordinance of 1842 provided political equality for coloured people, although in 1852 they were excluded from the franchise in the ZAR (Boer Republic). They were granted the franchise in the Cape Colony in 1853, though excluded in the OFS (Boer Republic) in 1854. By 1872, they were given full political rights in the representative government in the Cape, but by 1892 a property and education franchise qualification was instituted (Du Pre 1994, 280).

20 The Group Areas Act was one of three acts of the Parliament of South Africa endorsing urban apartheid in which designated racial groups were assigned separate residential and business areas.

21 In Latin America, the corresponding concept of *mestizaje* emphasised the sexual unions between Europeans and Native Americans.

22 Support of the South African Party in the 1908 elections (Lewis 1987, 46); voting for Hertzog's National Party; and voting for the National Party, their former oppressors, in 1994, despite their participation in the anti-apartheid struggles in the 1950s–1980s.

23 The TLSA emerged out of, but separately from, the APO in 1913. According to Lewis (1987, 74), it "was intended partly as a think-tank of Coloured intellectuals for the APO and as positive evidence of the APO's commitment to 'uplift' for the wider Coloured community."

24 Speech given by Helen Southern-Holt at the National Council of Women in South Africa in 1947 (Eoan Archive, box 37, folder 300, 1).

25 I borrow this term from Hazel Carby (1998), who is critical of the masculinist representation of black sociocultural and intellectual life by men such as Du Bois.

26 The musical band consists of only the members who play instruments, usually adult men with a few youths who are talented enough to perform with the men. Initially, the youth were only young men but later included young women. I refer to the instrumental section of the band as the musical band as opposed to the entire Christmas band.

27 UCT publishes a weekly *Monday Paper,* one of which featured several new lecturers who were appointed in 2004 at the SA College of Music. I learned that a band member who works at the university had taken this edition to an executive meeting, which is where it was decided that I should be given a more prominent role musically.

2

Ethnography of the Christmas Bands Movement

> It is true that local music-making in the sense of direct participation in performance is the pursuit of a minority. But this minority turns out to be a more serious and energetic one than is often imagined, whose musical practices not only involve a whole host of other people than just the performers, but also have many implications for urban and national culture more generally. (Finnegan 1989, 6)

Most of my initial understanding of the workings of Christmas bands was based on my involvement as participant-observer and member of the St Joseph's Christmas Band (hereafter, St Joseph's). I had heard about their musical prowess at the Christmas bands competitions and about their self-taught bandmaster's astonishing musical arranging abilities through Valmont Layne, the former Director of Cape Town's District Six Museum.[1] They seemed an appropriate and important band to study, not only for these reasons but also because they were one of the oldest bands in existence, formally established in 1936. I use them as a case study in this chapter from which to generalise about the Christmas Bands Movement, as all the bands tend to operate in a similar manner. This ethnography therefore follows my initial experience and understanding of the Christmas bands through an intensive study of St Joseph's, and my meeting with other bands is introduced in subsequent chapters where it is more relevant to the construction of the ethnography. Similarly, I introduce the women of the Christmas bands only in Chapter 6, documenting their involvement in the ethnography to shadow their own much later participation as performers in the bands and my subsequent introduction to their involvement.

In this chapter, I investigate how the bands constitute themselves as respectable members of society through disciplinary routines, uniform dress and military gestures, using Foucault's notion of embodied subjectivity to interpret how certain members of the Christmas bands construct their subjectivities as individuals and as collectives. I also explore the notion of respectability, a nineteenth-century British phenomenon employed to domesticate the working classes through the influence

of the temperance movement and the organisations that it spawned, such as the Salvation Army and the Church Lads Brigades. Hardly a political movement, the Christmas Bands Movement can nevertheless be considered a discursive strategy by a particular group of subalterns to resist the negative cultural stereotypes about them that emerged under colonialism and continued under apartheid. The engagement and indeed the enactment of the politics of respectability are directly connected to the notion (perhaps more poignantly, the lack) of equal citizenship. The chapter should be understood within these two complementary discourses: the politics of respectability and the desire for full citizenship.

The ethnographic sketch of the history and organisation of the Christmas Bands Movement that follows allows me to make certain interpretive moves around the reinterpretation of public space, cultural identity, notions of respectability and embodied subjectivity.

History of the Christmas Bands Movement

The Christmas Bands Movement, which consists of Christian wind and string bands, is a cultural formation unique to the Western Cape of South Africa. There are several prototypes in South Africa and other parts of the world in the form of military and paramilitary bands, church bands such as the Salvation Army and Moravian Church brass bands, and Lads' Brigades of the Anglican and Dutch Reformed Churches, with their drum and fife bands. The earliest documentation of Christmas bands is of "various instrumental bands" referred to as Christmas choirs that paraded on Christmas Eve until the morning, collecting alms for the churches in the 1850s (*Cape Argus* 1857 cited in Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 195). The oldest extant Christmas bands started in the first three decades of the twentieth century as family vocal groups that performed in their neighbourhoods, singing Christmas carols to their extended families and neighbours.[2] They had changed to performing on instruments by the 1920s, initially only on strings and then slowly incorporating saxophones from the 1930s and brass instruments by the 1960s.

This familial aspect is still prevalent in the bands. Two or three families that have remained strong within the organisational structure usually started a band, often recruiting relatives or friends of the original members. Consequently, there are several overlapping familial relations within individual bands. In one case, a junior boy had two grandfathers, several uncles from both sides and other interconnecting family members in the band. The members often admit that they are just like one big family. The children respectfully address older people as aunt or uncle. Since the younger children often addressed me this way, it took me a while to realise that in many cases these were not fictitious relations.

In local parlance, the bands are still referred to as Christmas choirs, especially by the older members. In Afrikaans, the preferred spoken language, they were referred to as *Kersfeeskore*, although they have not been officially referred to as such since the 1960s. What sets the Christmas bands apart from their various prototypes is the emphasis on organisation around Christmas and New Year embedded within the concept of community maintenance and revitalisation – a phenomenon common to all three parading practices in the Western Cape: Christmas bands, Malay choirs and the *klopse*. These musical organisations share a similar history, organisational structures and methods of operation. They emerged out of the street culture that flourished in the early years of the Cape and were later attached to sports clubs; hence, they still refer to their practice as their "sport" and their headquarters as the clubhouse, usually the home of one of the leaders or founders. Other connections with sports are their wearing of a sports blazer; their annual competitions held at sports stadiums; and the fact that the names of the Christmas Bands Unions (umbrella bodies) are similar to those of sports unions in the Western Cape, e.g. City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union, and City and Suburban Rugby Football Union (established in 1898, changing its name to City Park Sports Board in 1992). In the interviews I conducted, the interviewees used the concepts of sports and culture interchangeably; as one of my interviewees, Dennis Baartman, mentioned, "This is the sport, this is our culture" (DB 1/25/08).

Christmas bands are formally constituted organisations ranging in size from about 40 to over 100 members (one of the largest bands, Perseverance Christmas Band, has a membership list of 239), with an executive body consisting of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, trustees, a captain and a bandmaster.[3] They perceive themselves as volunteer organisations offering community services by performing at church and community events and lifecycle celebrations of their members and supporters. Their repertoire consists of carols, hymns, Christian marches and special classical pieces performed at their annual competitions. Although Christmas bands exist independently of churches, they enjoy close affiliations with several Christian denominations. It is believed that the first Christmas Band in Cape Town, the Young Guiding Stars Sacred String Band (hereafter referred to as Young Guiding Stars),[4] has been in existence since 1923 but was officially established only in 1932 (FdK 1/31/08). However, there is some dispute over which is the oldest band. Wynberg Progress Christmas Band also claims this position, as it was already in existence in 1915, although the date of establishment varies on the badges of different uniforms: every time they had a new uniform made, they changed the date to that year (MH 6/05/07), so in different photographs different "established dates" are recorded on the badges of the blazer.

Apparently, Young Guiding Stars set the standard for Christmas bands that followed in terms of instruments, repertoire and dress. This band drew members from the Claremont neighbourhood and started out as a string band, the instrumentation consisting of violins, banjos, guitars, cellos and mandolins. The violins carried the melody until the alto saxophones replaced them in the 1950s. In interviews, I learned that at first younger people took to the sound of the saxophone; later, the trumpet was preferred for a while, apparently coinciding with the instrument's popularity in jazz,[5] which seemed to have attracted increasing interest from the local population (HS1 7/25/01 and CS 7/19/01). These days the bands feature a line-up of wind players – in a band of 100 members, there can be 30 to 40 instrumentalists consisting of saxophones, trumpets, a few trombones, one or two tubas and euphoniums – and a small string section made up of guitars, banjos and cellos.[6] There is also an equally large section, composed mainly of younger members, often children of the instrumentalists, who do not yet play instruments but march ahead of the band, led by the three *voorlopers* (drum majors: *voor* literally means in front, and *loper* means a walker, thus meaning the one who walks in front).

As stated earlier, the bands perceive themselves as volunteer organisations offering community services by performing at church and community events. This charitable aspect was part of the Christmas bands from their earliest incarnations (Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 195). Their busiest period is from November to early April. From 24 December through to mid-March, they participate in the street parades (discussed under "The road marches") and they are involved in Christmas band competitions in the months of February through April (see Chapter 5). Their uniform consists of trousers, a club blazer and badge, a shirt and tie, matching socks and shoes, a belt and a hat. The membership is categorised into three sections: "tiny tots", from as young as three to ten years old; "juniors" from eleven to eighteen years; and "seniors" – the oldest members are in their seventies and eighties. They are affiliated to umbrella bodies: Christmas Bands Unions are organisations that consist of several Christmas bands and together the unions form the two Christmas Bands Boards.

Meetings

General meetings are held once or twice a month on Sunday afternoons at the various *klopskamers* (clubhouses). The clubhouse of St Joseph's, with which I had the most contact, was situated in Fairways, a middle-class coloured neighbourhood, for 39 years until 2012, after which it moved to Grassy Park. This clubhouse was an L-shaped lounge and sunken dining room with the dimensions of 3,15 m by 5,85 m and 4,20 m by 4,25 m respectively. Several trophies won at the various competitions

Figure 2 Mr September with a selection of uniforms from previous years and a few trophies on the top shelf behind him.

took pride of place on a table in the hallway, as well as on the mantelpiece and open shelves inside the clubroom.

The meetings follow common formal meeting procedures with a stipulated agenda. The executive members sit around the dining table with the rest of the membership spread around the room on every chair, the sofa, and taking up much of the floor space at the well-attended weekly meetings held during "the season" (December through March).[7] The chairperson, the most vocal member, generates discussions and keeps order according to common meeting procedures. Finances can take up a sizeable portion of the agenda. During this session, members participate in a form of lay-by in which they pay off instalments on their uniforms throughout the year. Uniforms are changed every second year and members already start to contribute small amounts of money from February two years before they receive the new uniform.

Members are also responsible for paying season fees, which pay for the bus that transports them on the road marches and to the stadiums for competitions. Once the meeting has dealt with the agenda, it is opened up for general discussion in which members can introduce any points for debate. This is a time for members to bring up points of conflict in the band or amongst individual members. Sometimes a member expresses his or her satisfaction with the smooth running of the band; others may

voice their dissatisfaction with the way the executive operates; members often say nothing. Sometimes the chair goes around the entire room asking each member whether she or he has anything to contribute or wants to open up for discussion, making sure that everyone is accommodated. The meetings end with a prayer. In the winter months when the band is less busy, practices are held after a shortened meeting once a month. Scheduled practices resume in September, ranging from as few as twice a month to four weekly rehearsals as the season draws closer.

The meetings are important ritual spaces in which the band members learn the moral codes of the band. The values of orderliness and respect for each member as well as "disciplinary practices" of meeting formalities and organisational methods are also imparted here. I discuss these later under "Strategies of disciplining".

The road marches

The road marches are some of the most exciting events on any Christmas band's calendar. These street parades include house visitations on Christmas Eve and every Sunday thereafter until the entire membership has been visited. They may also visit the homes of patrons (in the past St Joseph's visited the homes of some white patrons)[8] who have supported them for many years, and old age homes. Members assemble at the clubhouse from about an hour before they leave on the road march. Before each road march, the band holds a short meeting to collect uniform payments and season fees, and to confirm which houses the band will visit on the day. Although the house visitations are decided on well before the first road march on Christmas Eve and members are given a hand-out informing them of the band's seasonal itinerary, the programme is always verified on the day in case matters have changed. Significantly, St Joseph's very first house visitation on Christmas Eve is often to the neighbouring clubhouse of the Young Guiding Stars. Before they leave, a member offers a prayer of thanks, requesting safety on the roads. After playing one or two Christmas carols in front of their clubhouse, they set off marching in file, three abreast. They accompany themselves with a hymn, "Fairest Lord Jesus", played to a strident marching beat driven by the banjos and guitars. At the neighbouring clubhouse, the members of Young Guiding Stars form a guard of honour and St Joseph's marches through two rows of men who hold their hats in their hands and over their hearts as a sign of respect for the visiting band. Once inside the property, they play two Christmas songs, "Oh come all ye faithful" and "Mary's boy child", to rapturous applause. Then Mr Cecil Tookley, St Joseph's senior drum major, addresses Young Guiding Stars as follows: "*Ek dank die Here, vir die vriendskap wat daar heers tussen hierdie twee Kersfeeskore. Ek wens julle geluk met die Kersfees en Nuwe Jaar en aller voorspoed met die kompetisies asook God se seën aan die koor vir die res van die jaar*." ("I thank the

Lord for the constant friendship between these two Christmas choirs. I wish you a happy Christmas and New Year and best wishes for the competitions as well as God's blessing on the choir for the rest of the year.") Mr Fred de Kock, the senior drum major of Young Guiding Stars, addresses St Joseph's in a similar manner. This seems to be a ritual exchange of good wishes for Christmas, the New Year and the upcoming competitions. These two bands have a strong relationship and regularly support each other at the competitions, assisting each other with the preparations. They no longer compete against each other, as they are in different unions and boards; hence there is no tension between them. Then Young Guiding Stars give St Joseph's a small monetary donation, which is usually reciprocated when Young Guiding Stars visit their clubhouse later that night. After these formalities, St Joseph's set off playing and marching through a guard of honour, again formed by the Young Guiding Stars. Mr de Kock of Young Guiding Stars leads St Joseph's by marching vigorously ahead of Mr Tookley. After a while Mr de Kock gives way, moves off to the side of the road still marching vigorously, then stands to attention with his hat over his heart as the marching file passes.

The formality of this process and its association with military (and church) practice is prevalent in the Christmas bands' activities and, as I argue in Chapter 5, these symbolic acts are implicated in the enactment of citizenship and the idealisation of community. During the performance of rituals like these, Christmas band members dynamically preserve their cultural practice and simultaneously constitute their subjectivities: uniforms, deportment and parades embody the notions of respectability and discipline that are integral to the way in which they constitute themselves. It is within such collective experiences and discursive formations that their collective history and culture can be located (see Mama 1995, 89). These symbolic acts are not merely imitative of or in admiration of militarism; they are deeply situated cultural attitudes, knowledges and discourses around notions of respect, discipline, order and integrity. Through them, the bands – and their communities – consciously challenge notions of their perceived "lack of culture," proudly displaying instead a community that is deeply engaged in cultural "truth making".

This ritual renewal of friendship between the band and its members' families is performed numerous times throughout the parade season and the intensity of the ritual never abates. The members repeat the speech at the house visitations almost verbatim, with slight variations to accommodate the member or family being addressed. The younger members often mimic the formula of the senior members. The fact that these words are said and sincerely meant is more important than their verbatim reiteration annually. In her ethnography of the ritual journey made by the *folia de reis*, the musical ensembles that accompany the Three Kings during the Christmas season in Brazil, Suzel Reily (2002, 172) asserts that there is a "definite ritual script to be followed."

Figure 3 St Joseph's road march in Parkwood Estate showing the "junior" and "tiny tot" drum majors in the foreground.

The "ritual script" there covers the entire event performed at each house visitation in various regions of Brazil during the Christmas season. In the case of the Christmas bands in the Western Cape of South Africa, besides the entire event being ritually scripted, the actual speech content also seems formulaic. There is much comfort in performing a ritual; everyone involved knows what to do and what to expect. There are no surprises, which can only detract from reverent observation of the ritual.[9] Besides, the pressure to perform or to be innovative is taken off any person entrusted to represent the band through speechmaking. In fact, innovation is not necessarily encouraged. This attitude is not obviously asserted, but when someone is innovative during the ritualised performance, it is usually commented upon through teasing or even encouragement, which is usually not derogatory, but is generally enough to stop it from recurring. A kind of "ritual script" is also evident in the members' prayers. Although similarly scripted rituals can be found in the churches or other religious bodies, what sets the Christmas bands apart is that they are marginal, self-sustainable community organisations that include the expressive practices of a particular cultural cohort.

The community takes obvious pride in their band, shown through the general excitement when the band visits their neighbourhood. The supporters usually line the streets, applauding and waving when the band arrives, marching alongside and commenting on how good the members look in their uniform and how well they

play. Often these admirers are women – the wives and mothers, daughters, sisters or girlfriends of the band members. In the past, women were not allowed to be part of the bands and usually waited for the men to arrive at their houses. I argue in Chapter 6 that this situation started to change from the 1990s with the adoption of a new constitution in the "new" South Africa.

The community's response seems to express the joy of ushering in the Christmas season through what has become an age-old tradition in the Western Cape, clearly associated with the lower-class coloured communities. In poorer communities, especially, association with the band gives the members a certain status. The communities look forward to the annual visit of the band; they adopt the band as their own by referring to it as "our band". This joy is also expressed by the spontaneous outbursts of Capetonians into a local shuffling dance as the bus transporting the band playing Christmas carols or other upbeat tunes, accompanied by the guitars and banjos stridently driving characteristic local rhythms, passes by.

The reinterpretation of public space: Spectacular moments

The band's arrival in the communities is quite spectacular: it seizes attention both visually and sonically. The three drum majors lead the "juniors" followed by the "tiny tots", who march in strict file, three abreast. The "seniors" make up the instrumental band that follows, led by the trumpeters, who are followed by the saxophones from soprano to baritone, then the trombones and tubas or other larger horns, and finally the "background" (mainly strings), consisting of guitars, *klein bassie* (literally "little bass": a cello slung over the shoulder like a guitar and played *pizzicato*, like a jazz double bass)[10] and banjos as well as a piano accordion. The comparative notion of *charivari* and the callithumpian bands of the early 1800s on the east coast of the USA, in which musical instruments and noise were used to register discontent with the authorities (Cockrell 1997, 32–33), seems an appropriate analogy here. I do not mean to imply that the bands are merely capable of vociferous clamour but something akin to the signalling of a groundswell of power and the claiming of city space by the east coast working classes is intrinsic to the way that the Christmas bands spectacularly announce their arrival in the communities they visit.

Several writers have addressed the importance of the appropriation of public space in relation to the New Year's Carnival in Cape Town. They suggest that its importance is connected to the fact that the coloured people were forcibly relocated to far-flung areas on the Cape Peninsula under apartheid and symbolically reclaim the central city space during the carnival. The use of powerful imagery in the writers' descriptions of this appropriation alludes to its significance. Martin (1999, 30) writes,

"[the] Coons,[11]…invade the city and take possession of it", while Don Pinnock (1987, 422) states, "the carnival…entailed the annual symbolic storming of the city by the poor" and Jeppie (1990, 39) asserts "[a]n event of singular significance on the calendar of working class culture," the New Year's Carnival involves the "occupation of public space by the dispossessed" (1990, 42). The significance of this appropriation is connected not only to the literal city space, but also to the figurative city space, which is perceived as indexical of the coloured communities. The coloured lower classes are acutely aware of the impact of their presence on the city's character, which adds to the vibrancy of its cultural space. They are often heard to say, "We are Cape Town" (Martin 1999, 30), or "without us, Cape Town would have had no history and no culture" (Martin 1997, 18), [12] or even, "without us, Cape Town is nothing!"[13] The contested nature of this appropriated space is inherent in such expressions.

Although the Christmas bands have not necessarily converged on the city centre, symbolically storming it every year,[14] they do annually "take possession" of certain areas on the outer edges of the city and in parts of the Western Cape. Historically, Christmas bands were established in ghettos and suburbs close to the city centre, such as District Six, Woodstock, Protea (now Rosebank), Newlands and Claremont as well as further afield in suburbs such as Wynberg, Diep River, Heathfield and Retreat (see map below). Through the Group Areas Act of 1950, the apartheid state declared many of these "white areas" and people who were not classified as such were subjected to the policy of forced removals during the 1960s and 1970s. This often included the destruction of the ancestral homes and clubhouses of the bands. It is significant that even though most members of Christmas bands have lived in different neighbourhoods since the forced removals, they hire buses to take them to greet their former neighbours on Christmas morning and throughout the festive season. The buses stop a distance from the former neighbours' homes; the members disembark and then parade to these homes. In this way, they map out and enact a sense of community and place through the memory of and nostalgia for those places once regarded as home. Despite the dislocation of these communities through apartheid policies, the members have almost defiantly retained old neighbourhood connections. The community members' responses are often very emotional: jubilant, or in the case of older people in particular, tearful.

There could be several reasons for these emotive displays. One of these is that through the special visitation they are personally recognised by the community. This is especially the case for widows of former bandsmen who no longer receive regular annual visits. They are thus overjoyed and quite emotional when the band does visit them in recognition of their significant role in the band in their former active years. Another reason for this emotive display is the band's evocation of the memory of the former homes and neighbourhoods from which they were forcibly removed and

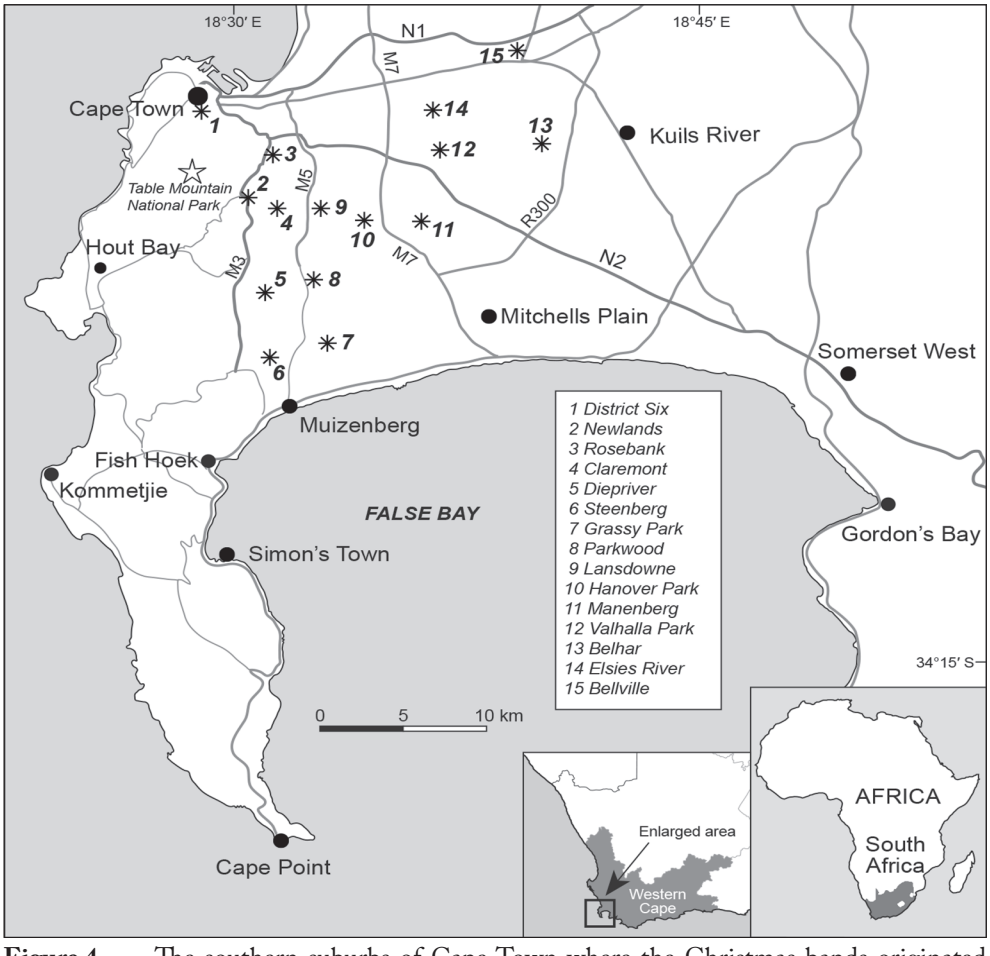


Figure 4 The southern suburbs of Cape Town where the Christmas bands originated and still flourish.

after which they have never quite healed. The visitation recalls the loss of home. The notion of the home as a safe, wholesome place in contrast to the danger and depravity of the streets presents an interesting dichotomy. While carnival street parades are historically spaces of wild abandon and an express lack of decency, the Christmas band parades are distinctly opposed to those sentiments. Notwithstanding their earlier displacement, the purpose of these parades seems to be the affirmation of respectable Christian homes. In his seminal book on Brazilian culture, DaMatta (1991, 75–76) describes the Catholic ritual of the feast day of a saint, in which the saint's image is processed through the streets and into the devotees' houses, "sacralizing" the streets and dissolving the boundaries between street and house. Perhaps here too the Christmas bands "sacralize" the streets temporarily as they march from the bus to the home of the member.

At most houses, the band is invited to partake of the *tafel* provided by the hosts. The table of local foods and delectable dishes ranges from fruit and juice to savoury meals such as curry and rice, to cakes, sweets, nuts, ice cream and sodas. There is often great speculation and teasing about what kind of *tafel* awaits the band at members' homes. The prize *tafel* is a *krief* (lobster) *tafel* and the members often exert subtle pressure on each other to present it.[15] Some members present standard *tafels* each year and certain homes are looked forward to with great eagerness. The concept of providing a *tafel* is common to all three parading groups in the Western Cape. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin (1968, 9) asserts that the feast was essentially related to time: "Moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always led to a festive perception of the world." In this spirit, the bands and their supporters renew their friendships with feasts at the start of each New Year.

Federal structures

The bands belong to umbrella organisations forming large bureaucratic structures that administer the competitions and negotiate with other cultural structures and government bodies. The Christmas Bands Unions were formed through the collective organisation of different bands. There are about 80 Christmas bands in the Western Cape, most of which are affiliated with several Christmas Bands Unions. The oldest union is City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union, established in 1942. A need for organisation on a larger scale was required when the bands participated in competitions for wartime charity (see Chapter 5). The union was established when the bands decided to organise these competitions annually. Other unions followed as more Christmas bands were established, for instance Peninsula and Districts Union in 1948, and Athlone and Districts Union in 1953. Ostensibly, the bands in a particular district belong to a union in that district. However, it does not always end up that way as individuals are persuaded to join certain unions where they have friends or family members. As a result, there are several overlaps in terms of the areas in which the clubhouses are located and the district in which the union has been established. Other reasons for these overlaps are squabbles between the bands that cause bands to leave a particular union for another. Consequently, there seems to be fluidity among band members in particular Christmas bands and unions, which could be rather confusing on entering the Christmas Bands Movement (see Appendix 1).

Together, the unions form larger organisational structures called boards. I attended the meetings of the South African United Christmas Bands Board (SAUCBB, often just referred to as "the Board"). The SAUCBB, to which St Joseph's belongs through the City and Suburban Union, was established on 21 March 2001 and initially consisted of seven unions, each with between five and nine individual bands.

The unions meet once a month and the board meets once a quarter. They follow similar meeting procedures as the individual band meetings, except that delegates of the individual bands or unions represent their bands at union meetings, or the unions at board meetings, respectively. The main purpose of these structures is to organise the annual competitions. Their duties include 1) recruiting adjudicators to evaluate critically the performances of the music, the military-style march and dress of the bands; 2) deciding on the prescribed piece; and 3) capturing and collating the results on competition day. The executives of the unions organise the competitions. They request names for adjudicators and a competition piece from each band.[16] The delegates of the bands bring these requests to the bands' general meetings, where such issues are discussed and names for adjudicators and a competition piece are forwarded to the next union meeting. These issues are voted on at the union meeting, and the delegates pass on information of the outcome to the bands. At board level, two representatives per union form the competition committee and the same process is undergone at this level. The unions hold the first rounds of competitions in late January and early February, after which the best of these bands participate in the board competitions in March or April.

Prior to the establishment of the SAUCBB, the first Christmas Choir Board was the Western Province Christmas Choir Board (WPCCB), established in 1976 through the efforts of members of Athlone and Districts and City and Suburban Christmas Bands Unions. They held a "festival" after six months, for which they acquired 42 trophies. Their union membership swelled to include four more unions: Ceres and Districts, South Western District, Western Cape and Elsies River Unions (from the brochure of the First Annual "Champ of Champs" Competition, 1996). According to this brochure, "The ultimate aim of the W.P.C.C. Board is to spread unity amongst all the bands involved in the Christmas Bands Movement." However, by 1996 they consisted of only four unions and another board, the South African Christmas Choir Board (SACCB) was also in existence. With the changes in government, practitioners of arts and culture can now apply for funding from the provincial governments. In the year 2000, members of two boards approached the provincial government for funding. They were informed that the government would support them only if they were unified under one umbrella structure. It had become commonplace for the new South African government to insist that all sports organisations be unified in that manner. For most sports organisations, the government's insistence on "levelling the playing fields" challenged their racialised methods of organisation, in which the sports unions in poorer areas remained disadvantaged, as they would not benefit from access to areas with clearly more money and better playing conditions. Moreover, the Christmas bands were required to participate in an annual city parade in order to receive government funding.

The officials of the two Christmas Bands Boards immediately started negotiations with the different unions and most unions joined the SAUCBB at the official opening in 2001. This meant that the other boards had to dissolve. While the SACCB did dissolve, the WPCBB did not; however, it dwindled to two unions (with a total of 11 bands). These two boards existed alongside each other until 2009, when a new board emerged out of the SAUCBB due to irreconcilable differences. The WPCBB was eventually dissolved in 2011 and the unions joined one of the existing boards. Increasingly, the boards have been roped into provincial government arts and culture activities. Since the first democratic elections in 1994, cultural activities of the formerly oppressed peoples have gained in prominence, not least as tourist attractions. Recently, there has been an attempt to control the local parading practices with the formation of *Die Kaapse Karnaval Assosiasie* (The Cape Carnival Association), which oversees and manages all parades in the city centre around Christmas and New Year. Consequently, Christmas bands parade in the city on Christmas Eve (from 11 pm),[17] Malay choirs on New Year's Eve (from 11 pm), and the minstrel troupes on 2 January (all day).

Historically, the Christmas bands marked the beginning of the festive season by parading in Claremont Main Road on the first Sunday in December. This was before Claremont was declared a "white area" by the apartheid state. In those years, the people lived nearby and the families and supporters lined the streets to hear their favourite bands play (CS 7/19/01). After the apartheid state put a stop to this organic community practice through their new racist laws, the bands continued to parade individually in their communities, but never came together as a large contingent to parade in the streets. Since 2003, parading jointly in the city and elsewhere has become an annual event. The participating bands receive a monetary donation towards their upkeep if they participate. Although the SAUCCB and the unions have obliged, the event does not appear to generate the same excitement of the past (CS 7/19/01).

Cultural identity, religious and moral underpinnings

On joining St Joseph's, I was struck by the strong religious undertones of the band practices and meetings. Prayers are offered constantly – no meeting or practice begins or ends without a prayer. The prayers provide a sacred frame to any Christmas band activity, acting as a strong reminder of the nature of their work, which is musical ministry. On the Sunday road marches at the beginning of the year when the band visits each member's home, a prayer is said at each house. Sometimes when arguments erupt in the meetings and emotions are running high, a member who is a lay preacher is asked to pray so that the meeting and members can regain their composure. Like

many other bands, St Joseph's has a lay preacher in the band who is often asked to pray, particularly at heated moments. One day he went into the ritual speech of prayer but did not actually pray, instead reiterating soothing words such as "*Laat ons kalm bly, ons vra vir kalmte, laat ons onthou waarom ons hier is*" ("Let's remain calm, we ask for calm, let us remember why we are here") like a mantra over and over to bring down the emotional levels.

Another religious indication is that the musical repertoire is mainly of a religious nature. Like many South Africans, including Capetonians who are not affiliated with the bands, I assumed that these bands were about having a jolly time over Christmas and New Year, which could include excessive use of alcohol.[18] While this may not be entirely untrue for members in some bands, the majority of members do not subscribe to this viewpoint, especially not as suitable behaviour on the road marches and in the bands' uniforms. However, at times when the members of St Joseph's are hanging out, waiting for others to arrive at the meetings or practices, they reminisce about the old days when certain of the older members took to the bottle regularly and even had to be sobered up very fast in order to represent the band in the competition piece! This surprised me, not only because these same members are some of the stalwarts of the band, but also because the leadership in both the local bands and federal structures are quite strict about social mores, and band members' behaviour is monitored closely. At competitions, if members of a particular band are found to be irresponsible, consuming alcohol or misbehaving, the band is fined. At the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union meeting following the 2005 competition there was a complaint about some supporters who had clearly been consuming alcohol and "behaving worse than the coons" which was "shocking!"[19] The implication was that the Christmas bands are Christians who should know better and behave in a dignified manner.

Much of what I have just described is attributable to the fact that the Christmas bands emerged out of the sociocultural milieu of the temperance movement.[20] In particular, the religious emphasis and the importance of values such as respectability, discipline and order are common to both organisations. The temperance movement started in Europe and gained momentum in the United States in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.[21] The International Order of Good Templars reached the colonial city of Cape Town in 1873 and, after a slow start, by the 1890s the Good Templars boasted a membership of 10 000, while the True Templars (the black branch of the Good Templars) had a membership of 12 000.[22] The problem of drunkenness in the colony was already widespread by the 1830s. This was due to various factors such as farm labourers being paid by the *dop* (tot) system[23] and the fact that wine and brandy were the most available, cheapest and healthiest beverages accessible to passing ships. Although excessive drinking was recognised as a social problem in the 1830s, by

the late-nineteenth century it had become almost endemic. Not only were soldiers, sailors and travellers often inebriated, but alcohol had been the cause of ruin of many working-class people. The middle classes recognised that the working classes lacked recreational activities and recreational spaces and thus turned to pubs to fulfil this need. They were also aware that the working classes experienced such harsh living and working conditions that drinking had become a way of forgetting their dreadful reality. Since many of the farm labourers paid by the *dop* system were coloured people, this excessive drinking had the effect of stereotyping coloured people as drunkards.

The temperance movement was a response to the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of cities in Europe and the USA throughout the nineteenth century and the ensuing social transformation that profoundly changed human life. Many voluntary associations and societies emerged aimed at alleviating some of the worst effects of urbanisation on the poor (Pearce 1985, 21). According to Lewis (1987, 14), these volunteer organisations "provided valuable training in administration and leadership" and often, as in the case of the Masonic lodges, "they stressed an ideology of equality and fraternity that had political overtones."[24] Emerging as it did in the Victorian era, the temperance movement was essentially a reform movement that emphasised certain qualities the middle classes perceived necessary for modern urban life. These were an emphasis on morality, order, frugality, and an efficient and productive workforce (Pearce 1985, 29, 35). The notion of respectability, another middle-class value emerging strongly in the Victorian era, was integral to the temperance movement.

The success of the movement with the working classes lay in the fact that it provided access to middle-class respectability. The stigma of the socially inferior, drunken coloured was no doubt extremely degrading and the movement particularly attracted people with desires for upward social mobility. Since the movement espoused ideas of self-reliance, progress and self-improvement through involvement in its organisational structures, it was ideal for working-class people seeking to rise to a higher social class or status. Consequently, the movement flourished in areas such as Woodstock, a respectable lower-class area, and amongst coloured people. The significance of the temperance movement reverberated in elite social and political organisations for many decades, as summed up by Gavin Lewis (1987, 14):

> For 'respectable' Coloureds alcoholism among the Coloured underclasses formed the most visible and humiliating indicator of their community's poverty and degradation, and temperance always remained a priority in Coloured political organizations later.

Lewis adds that for the coloured elites, these volunteer organisations, as well as "churches, clubs and societies, provided a means of developing and sustaining their

values as an elite community, incorporating new members, and overcoming language, religious or other barriers to create an overarching sense of class and community" (Lewis 1987, 14).

Another organisation that emerged during the Victorian era and adopted the military metaphor of Victorian England was the Salvation Army. The British Army was becoming increasingly popular after the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny of the 1850s, which inspired the establishment of a volunteer army of home guards in 1859 (Murdoch 1994, 100). According to Murdoch, the Salvation Army translated Britain's military spirit into the metaphor of "muscular Christianity", a term coined by Charles Kingsley.[25] Both the volunteers and Salvation Army provided drill as a pastime and offered respectability through a moderate amount of class mixing. The appeal of the British military happened on several fronts: the distinctive uniform, ceremonial inspections and parades, and their strict regulations. Together, the Salvation Army and the volunteers inspired many organisations in which military regimen and Victorian religion were fused. They provided a model for the Boys' Brigade (1883), Church Lads' Brigade (1890), a Boys' Life Brigade (1899), and the Boy Scouts (1908). All these organisations used army ranks and organisation (Murdoch 1994, 104). The Christmas Bands Movement is another example of the influence of the Salvation Army, which had a formidable mission in Africa from the 1880s and established itself in Cape Town, South Africa in 1883.[26]

If the Salvation Army did not directly inspire the bands in every aspect, then this certainly happened through one of the organisations that it spawned in which many of the founder members were involved. In fact, there is still a strong relationship between the Christmas bands and the Church Lads' Brigades: people involved in the brigades often train and recruit members to the Christmas bands (FdK 01/31/08 and RW 06/03/10). It was the Salvation Army that first asserted the connection between band playing and musical literacy that some Christmas bands' members viewed rather enviously in the early years (HS2 05/16/05). Coplan (1985, 82) suggests that both English and German "missionaries thought that [brass] bands would encourage 'civilization' and social discipline as well as attract new converts." Notions of "civilization", social discipline and cultural self-respect were important moral matters for new converts and the socially mobile. However, Martin (1999, 89) suggests – based on an etching by Heinrich Egersdörfer from 1884 – that the Salvation Army may also have inspired New Year revellers to adopt this form of ordered procession with drum majors, flag bearers, musicians playing brass instruments, and people flaunting umbrellas and playing tambourines while dancing along with the more ordered marching.

After the turn of the nineteenth century, three important coloured political organisations were in existence for which the notions of sobriety and probity were

of utmost importance. These were Francis Peregrino's[27] Coloured People's Vigilance Council, John Tobin's[28] Stone Meetings in District Six, and the better-known African Peoples Organization (APO)[29] that was successfully led by Dr Abdurahman for 35 years. All three organisations placed value on educational upliftment, economic self-help and respectability, as well as the principle of equal rights for civilised men. The "civilized status" was achieved through the "adoption of white middle class standards of behaviour" (Lewis 1987, 24). These beliefs were shared by their counterparts in the USA, espoused by leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. du Bois and others of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s (see Floyd 1990). In fact, Peregrino, who lived in the USA during the 1890s and whose ideas were influenced by both African-American leaders, was responsible for dispersing these ideas through several social organisations as well as through the newspaper he established, *South African Spectator* (Lewis 1987, 16–17).

Respectability

Like the temperance movement, Christmas bands emphasise middle-class respectability, discipline and order. Members are usually from the lower middle and working classes who are socially and politically conservative, are generally churchgoers, and manage to sustain comparatively decent, stable family lives. They value social formalities such as the annual address to families of band members on the road marches, the discipline and order displayed on these marches, as well as the official meeting procedures. Involvement in the bands has also meant that they have accrued certain organisational skills, such as chairing meetings, involvement as secretariat and treasury, public speaking, reporting back as delegates to the umbrella structures, and writing up and delivering reports by the executive members at the annual general meetings. The youth initially learn by observation through attendance of the band meetings and then more actively as they are roped into the organisational structures. These skills relate particularly to the ideas of self-reliance, progress and self-improvement espoused by the Templars.

In my earliest interactions with the Christmas bands, the notion of respectability emerged strongly in conversations and interviews with leaders of the movement. This often took the form of distancing themselves from "the coons", historically viewed with ambivalence – both disparagingly and with admiration – by the leadership of the more respectable Christmas bands and Malay choirs. I found this particularly intriguing when I learned through my close involvement and in interviews that the members and the leaders themselves were often part of the singing group or instrumental band accompanying the *klopse*.

Members of both Christmas bands and Malay choirs operate successfully in both kinds of organisation by bifurcating their involvement in these morally different

expressive practices, keeping them separate in their lives and within the practices. Even though they seem quite alike to an outsider, being a "coon" almost calls for a different person(ality) than that of a Christmas band member. In these cases, the subjective and ontological condition of participating in these different practices requires a conscious shift in one's relation to the world and way of being in the world.

Boonzajer-Flaes (2000, 110) describes a similar situation with the Surinam police band that serves the municipality and performs music in a respectable manner using music sheets and music stands, and wearing police uniforms. Yet, these same members moonlight in *bazuinkoren* (brass bands) performing at various community functions and lifecycle celebrations in a manner that is quite contradictory to their paid jobs. As members of a police band, they would never perform in the manner required of the latter. Boonzajer-Flaes ascribes this to the multi-layered character of the *bazuinkoren* and the fact that these two musical worlds existed side by side during colonial times, sharing personnel and a musical idiom despite the boundaries that "formed a constant source of potential or actual conflict" (Boonzajer-Flaes 2000, 110). In the same manner, the Christmas band members who play the brass instruments and Malay choir members who sing the vocals in the Minstrel Carnival don different hats when they participate in these dissimilar practices. Of course, in these instances the Christmas band members, as competent musicians (and solo singers from the Malay choirs), were able to increase their earnings considerably over a culturally significant period, and since they were not strictly speaking members of these organisations, they did not perceive their dual involvement as a moral dilemma.[30]

Strategies of discipline

Within the Christmas bands, members see discipline as a burning issue and they have devised quite explicit requirements about how it can be instilled and maintained. Firstly, members have to be disciplined to be good musicians. In rehearsals, this requires intense focusing; between rehearsals, it requires practising. The late bandmaster Wally Witbooi often reminded them: "Musicians have to be very disciplined; they have to be disciplined when they practice alone and they have to be disciplined at rehearsals, otherwise you gain nothing by it!" This attitude was echoed by the captain, Mr Lionel Pietersen: "*Dissipline mense, dissipline, asseblief*!" ("Discipline people, discipline, please!"). There is a significant morphing here of musical discipline (involving hard work, honing a skill) and self-discipline in *conduct*. They are two sides of the same coin for the leadership, who often emphasise the idea that musicians, especially in the Christmas bands, are disciplined people.

Secondly, marching strictly in file requires mental concentration and being physically aware of yourself and others, like marching in a platoon. On the road

marches, Mr Tookley, St Joseph's most senior drum major who trains the children, sometimes walks alongside the marching file with a switch, tapping it near the children's feet if they are tiring and not strictly executing the march. Thirdly, members see wearing the band's uniform as a privilege: misbehaviour on the parades or wearing it outside of the band's activities is seen as a misuse or even an abuse. In this sense, it is similar to school uniforms or religious costumes: you have to earn the right to wear them by observing the discipline. The uniform is integral to the ritual and it is somewhat "sacrilegious" to wear it out of context. It is also a way of making people look and feel "uniform" in their movements and attitudes. These measures, not simply about discipline for its own sake, are geared towards effective participation in the competitions. If the band does not do well at competitions, members attribute it to a discipline problem rather than anything else.

Discipline is thus an overarching strategy by which people constitute themselves: moving in line, orderly appearance and deportment are some of the ways in which this is done; the structure of meetings is another. General meetings are particularly well placed for the transmission of the band's ethical values. The way formal meetings are structured shows this particularly well. The executive consists of a hierarchical committee and they adhere to strict meeting procedures. The chairperson reprimands young and old members when they speak out of turn. Children from as young as two and three years old attend, sitting on their fathers' or grandfathers' knees, where they learn the organisational rituals of the band. Members look neat and wear the band's past blazers to meetings, although this does not seem to be strictly enforced, and the younger members dress more casually. (The band's "father" did express his disappointment with this laxness in an interview. He thought that at least the young executive members should wear their blazers to the meetings and that their fathers should perhaps explain these matters to their sons [HS4 01/19/07]). Furthermore, the annual ritual exchanges and renewal of friendships require members to be attentive and disciplined. These are usually on a Sunday, customarily a holy day, and members are in their best dress and are expected to be on their best behaviour. It is particularly when the band is out in the community that their code of ethics is strictly observed.

While the founder members of the Christmas Bands Movement were not the architects of these disciplinary practices – they did not suddenly arrive all at once; similar codes of ethics and "discourses of truth" (Foucault 1980, 93) are evident in many voluntary organisations in cosmopolitan societies – the bands have certainly localised these "discourses of truth", making them their own. Their adoption of these discursive strategies has allowed them to make sense of their subjective political experiences, which have consistently exposed an ambiguity around their inclusion in the nation-state and their identity as South Africans. Through their "truth making", they creatively articulate a form of human subjectivity and an expressive citizenship

that is ultimately concerned with an ethical/aesthetical self. These values are carefully constructed through their organisational structures and practices.

Constructing value

The trustees of the band are usually younger, often school-going members who are elected to the executive committee to serve in this position. As such, they take care of the band's assets. This is not an insignificant position; the bands, rather than the members, usually own the instruments, which are now placed in the care of these younger members. At a house visitation to the home of one of the young, school-going trustees, Mr Cecil Tookley, who often addresses the families, thanked the parents for allowing their son to participate in the band: "*Dankie vir julle seun en dat julle hom so getrou na die aktiwiteite van die Kersfeeskoor bring. Hy is 'n wonderlike voorbeeld vir die jongspan. Hy is 'n betroubare trustee, sy oupa sou baie trots op hom wees as hy nog gelewe het*." ("Thank you for your son and for bringing him so faithfully to the Christmas choir's activities. He is a wonderful example to the younger children. He is very dedicated to his duties as a trustee; his grandfather would have been very proud of him had he still been alive.")

An example illustrating this affirmation through gesture occurs when the band visits the homes of the "tiny tots" or "junior" *voorlopers*: *they* rather than the "senior" *voorloper* lead the Christmas bands to their homes. This gesture is especially poignant when the youngest *voorloper,* often not older than six years – who usually walks third in line behind the "senior" and "junior" *voorlopers* – leads a band of 40 to 60 members ranging in age from three years to over 80 years old.

In this way value is constructed and through these gestures members learn to appreciate one another, not only as band members but also as human beings. Through these practices, they also learn about their own past and their history as families ("your grandfather would have been proud of you") and construct a history or a notion of who they are and where they come from, collectively.

The above example also relates to Gritten and King's (2006, xx) notion of music and gesture, namely that

> a gesture is a movement or change in state that becomes marked as significant by an agent. This is to say that for movement or sound to be(come) gesture, it must be taken intentionally by an interpreter, who may or may not be involved in the actual sound production of a performance, in such a manner as to denote it with the trappings of human significance.

While their book is concerned with musical gesture in the performance of instruments, I find these ideas useful for considering musical events and cultural practices such as the Christmas Bands Movement, especially the notion involving "the trappings of

human significance." With the collapse of a vibrant civic society that characterised many coloured and other black communities during the anti-apartheid struggle, the lower-class youth have been left with little to engage with socially and may often be caught up in marginal activities leading to crimes in which even human life may not be cherished. The simple but important gestures displayed in the annual rituals are therefore highly significant to the youth involved in the Christmas bands, affirming the value of each member to the band and its community. The gestures not only reveal but also embody a civic pride embedded in the organisation that is often lacking in communities.

During the parade season, the band also visits the homes of members who are no longer active because of old age, sickness or lack of interest. The aged and sick members look forward to the annual visit, but sometimes the visit is emotionally charged, especially if the member has become physically feeble over the year. The visits to members who no longer attend can also be emotionally fraught, depending on the reasons for their leaving the band, and there are usually rousing appeals urging the regressive member to return, as his or her place in the band has remained empty.

Visitation of the aged and the sick who may not be members but were lifelong supporters is a tenet of the band, although it is not always possible during the parade season.[31] Given the size of the band and spread of areas throughout the Cape Peninsula in which the membership resides, the member visitations can take up to three months, which gives the band little time for anyone else. However, whenever there is a request for such a visit, the members are urged to do the correct thing and visit the person in need, as that is essentially what the Christmas bands are about. The older men, who have clearly grown up with these values, perhaps in a time when the bands were smaller and life was less pressured, usually express these ideas. The younger and more recent members sometimes show less empathy and want to adhere to executive decisions in which the house visitations were decided months in advance. Usually the band is guided by sound moral principles on these matters. Sometimes this can lead to considerable tension between the generations. In such sizeable organisations that have been together for many years, there are many disagreements, some of them years old, that can come flooding back at the slightest provocation.[32] On one occasion, the matter of visiting a sick elderly person emerged in the short meeting before the band left for the house visitations. Heated discussion ensued about the correctness of entertaining late requests. The meeting was dismissed without resolving the matter; then, somewhere along the route, a decision was taken to do the right thing and to visit the elderly supporter, and nothing more was said about it.

Another memorable instance on the road marches occurred when the band visited the home of a member who had left the band under a cloud (before I joined it). Before they reached his house, his uncle, a senior member who often addressed the families

on behalf of the band, told me that there would be tears at the next house. He seemed to want to alert me to something of extreme sensitivity and importance. At the house things were discussed very openly, although nothing specific was mentioned. As a new member, I was therefore left in the dark about what had actually occurred. I got the feeling that the sensitivity of the matter was too awkward and mentioning it would have been too disrespectful. Both the uncle and his nephew were clearly emotional and the wife of the nephew shed some tears.[33] His uncle addressed him on behalf of the band as follows: "*Wat jy gedoen het was nie reg nie; jy moet regstel wat verkeerd is met die eksekutief sodat ons almal kan voortgaan. Jou plek is met St Joseph's, nie met 'n ander koor nie. Ons nooi u om weer terug te kom, so gou soos volgende Sondag*." ("What you did was not right; you should set the matter straight with the executive so that everyone can move forward. Your place is with St Joseph's and not another band. We extend an invitation to you to return, even as soon as the next Sunday.") The nephew replied rather emotionally: "*Ek mag miskien 'n lid van 'n ander koor wees maar my hart is met St Joseph's*." ("I might be a member of another choir (band), but my heart is with St Joseph's.") They reached an agreement that he could not join in the competitions, as he had been registered with another band, but since he still had St Joseph's uniform, he could definitely join them on the Sunday road marches. The member returned the next Sunday and soon headed the band as the senior *voorloper*, which had been his role before he left. At the next annual general meeting (AGM), he was elected chairperson of the band, a position he held for several terms. As this family is well represented in St Joseph's – their late father had been a founding member of the band – they visited his ailing mother annually until her death in 2010. She expressed her joy that her son had returned to St Joseph's thus: "*Ek is bly my seun is terug met St Joseph's; dit was 'n ongelukkige tyd vir almal toe hy weg was.*" ("I am glad my son has returned to St Joseph's; it was a terribly unhappy time for all of us when he was away from the band.")

Judging from these incidences, one could conclude that the parade season is a way of renewing community and family ties as well as sorting out band and sometimes even family disagreements.[34] The parades are also the means through which certain communal values are established and transmitted to the younger generation. Values such as the importance of giving comfort to the elderly and the sick and ministering to them musically are emphasised. Also, the unconditional reacceptance of members who have left the band and, in so doing, socially regressed – especially if they had not left to join another Christmas Band – is significant for the continued successful operation of the cultural practice.

Musical sound of community

The importance of music – especially as part of cultural practices, which are inherently social organisations – as a social connector and marker of identity has been the focus of many ethnomusicological research studies (see Turino 1984, 1993; Pacini Hernandez 1995; Austerlitz 1997). Thomas Turino (2008) argues that the goal underlying indigenous participatory practices is to enhance social bonding and that various sound features such as rhythmic repetition and dense sonic textures function to reach this goal (e.g. Zimbabwean mbira music and Aymara panpipe music in Peru). Furthermore, he suggests that dense overlapping textures, wide tunings and loud volume provide a "*cloaking function* that helps inspire musical participation" (2008, 46, italics in original). The focus of attention is therefore not on sound as an end product, but rather on the heightened social interaction integral to the performance activity. Similarly, although Christmas bands draw upon the repertoire and musical practice of western hymnody and light classical pieces rather than create a new repertoire, and although it is performed in a largely presentational way, they constitute large social organisations of musical and related performance where music functions to connect people in very special ways. Band members and their local supporters bond as a community: in this case, by adhering to a particular cultural practice and Christian ethics.

Thus, at important occasions such as the annual ritual house visitations and competitions, members of these communities experience a deep social engagement and solidarity in which music plays a crucial role. They experience a *communitas* (Turner 1969) in which petty differences disappear and they unite through their common humanity. Through their participation, they learn not only what it means to be a member of a Christmas band, but that these practices with their enduring notions of discipline, order and morality ultimately involve a performance of citizenship through their parading of respectability. Since the notion of citizenship was such an elusive one for the coloured community throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Christmas bands' embodiment of respectability and their moral constitution of their collective selves are, I suggest, an enactment of their desire for the recognition of their inalienable right to citizenship. Even though the democratic elections in 1994 changed the political situation for South Africans, the working-class coloured people among whom I did my fieldwork do not necessarily feel that much has changed for them.

Christmas bands consist of a variety of wind instruments; however, the overall sound, much like the sound of the wind bands accompanying minstrel troupes and the Malay choirs, is quite unlike the sound of a typical wind band. This is due to a range of factors that may be perceived as unconventional performance practices in comparison with standard cosmopolitan performance practices and band styles. Firstly, the bands are quite heterogeneous in their constitution: no two bands have

a similar instrumentation format. Each Christmas band is thus unique in some way, as each one is constituted with whichever wind and string instruments are at hand. Secondly, typical values for the preference of certain sound qualities such as wide tuning, a predilection for breathiness on the saxophones, and relaxed phrasing and embouchure are passed on generationally, leading to a locally distinctive band sound. Thirdly, the saxophones, though sweet sounding, are played with a pinched reed, which gives the timbre a rather nasal quality. Fourthly, the unique sound of the Christmas bands is in part due to their choice of harmonic progressions. I describe the harmonic progressions of the arrangement of the hymn "Great is thy faithfulness", which renders progressions typical of the Christmas bands to deliver that unique sound (see Appendix 2). The hymn is unusually harmonised in five-part harmony, with the most common chords being the primary chords I, IV and V, chord ii and the occasional use of chords iii and vii. The fifth part is created with the sixth added to the primary chords I and IV and the seventh, ninth or eleventh, or a combination of these, added to chords V, ii and iii. These harmonisations lend the music a jazz feeling, especially when used in succession. Although the hymn is based on chordal progressions of the common practice, the arranger of the music is unaware of the rules associated with the practice and makes liberal use of consecutive fifths and octaves, and enharmonic clashes. He does not resolve the progressions at the ends of phrases with the usual cadence progressions; instead, he may end the phrase on chord V with the added seventh, or chord I with the added sixth. Finally, the arrangements are often in close harmony, giving these bands quite a unique sound. The result is similar to the "heterogeneous sound ideal" (Wilson 1992) of New Orleans second-line brass bands. These factors, along with individualistic interpretations and practices within the ensemble, are responsible for the production of a dense sound, which indeed can be seen to epitomise in many ways the sound of Cape Town and the entire Western Cape region.

Another characteristic of this regional sound is the *ghoema* rhythm, a syncopated underlying rhythm found in several Western Cape musical practices, usually played on a single-headed barrel drum with the left hand marking the beat and right hand playing the syncopated rhythm. The banjos and guitars drive this underlying rhythm in the Christmas bands, as they do not usually incorporate drums. It can be transcribed as shown at the top of the next page.

These are essential sonic ingredients for the *ghoema* musical complex: the three parading "disciplines" in Cape Town in which the Christmas bands have played an integral role. A representation of this characteristic sound and rhythm is emulated in what is often referred to as the "Cape jazz" style brought to international attention by Abdullah Ibrahim through works such as "Mannenberg 'is where it's happening'".[35] I argue that the ensuing sound density masks individual performers and allows for

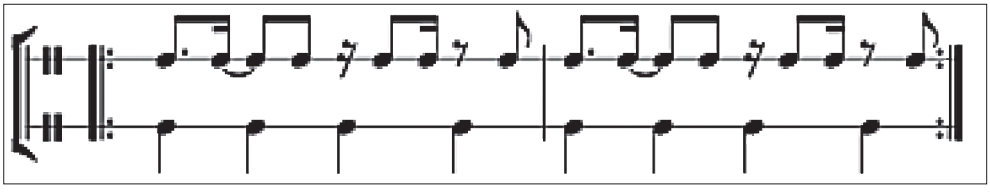


Figure 5 The *ghoema* rhythm can be heard in various genres of the Western Cape.

members at various performance levels to participate in the ensemble, particularly when the bands are performing on the road marches and at community events. When the band performs in the community, this typical "Cape" sound is not only desired by the community but also allows individual members to perform comfortably, without feeling self-conscious about their individual competence. Band members very quickly learn to play confidently within the ensemble. Having had to learn the clarinet in a hurry to play with the band on their road marches, I really appreciated this relaxed attitude, which allows for deeply embodied social experiences of feeling and playing music together.

As I stated earlier in this chapter, although I made an extensive study of one band and based much of my general discussion of the Christmas Bands Movement on my experience with the St Joseph's, most of the bands organise themselves in a very similar manner. Many bands have split up due to differences amongst members. The Young Guiding Stars, in particular, seem to have spawned a few Christmas bands. Some of them bear the same or a similar name with the place name of the clubhouse attached for differentiation, e.g. Young Guiding Stars Sacred String Band, Heideveld. While I discuss a particular band and its history in the next chapter, the operational methods as described above are more generalised, as members have adopted and applied them to the new bands.

Notes

1 The museum, established in 1994, is a memorial to the iconic, vibrant, mostly coloured, community and their trauma around forced removals in Cape Town in the 1960s and 1970s because of the Group Areas Act introduced in 1950 by the Nationalist government.

2 The notion of carolling came with the Europeans who spread the practice to their colonies.

3 Larger bands often include more members on the executive structure in positions such as assistant treasurer, assistant captain and assistant bandmaster as well as PRO, recording secretary, and so forth.

4 In the early colonial period, serenaders carried a lantern in the shape of a star on a pole and were called star singers (Martin 1999, 62). Many Christmas bands still have the word "Star" in their name.

5 This is possibly because of the inclusion of the trumpet in the music of Cuban *Son*.

6 Bigger bands can also include clarinets, flutes, sousaphones and other horns.

7 The season is the busiest time for the bands when they participate in various community-based events before and after Christmas and during the first few months of the New Year in which they perform their annual renewal ritual, which I discuss under "The road marches".

8 They regularly visited the home of Mr Clifford Harris, a well-known Cape Town entrepreneur and civil engineer, who was a patron of the City and Suburban Union.

9 Scott (1990, 47) confirms this when he asserts that rituals such as "[r]oyal coronations, national day celebrations, and ceremonies for those fallen in war thus seem to be choreographed in a way that is designed to prevent surprises."

10 Mr Hannes September was at pains to state that in the early years of St Joseph's existence, "seasoned musicians" played the cello "with the bow, not like they are playing it today" (HS2 05/16/05).

11 This is how the English authorities and the media referred to the *klopse*; the term can still be used in everyday parlance.

12 This claim is particularly interesting, considering that throughout the segregationist colonial and apartheid periods both whites and blacks perceived coloured people as lacking a distinct culture and heritage (see Caliguire 1996). This negative view, unfortunately, is still present in South African society: a case in point is the exposure by the media of a website of Blackman Ngoro, the former communications official of Cape Town, who referred to coloureds as "culturally inferior" and in need of "ideological transformation" (James 2005, 11).

13 I have often heard this sentiment expressed.

14 Since 2003 they have marched in the city on the Sunday before Christmas as part of a government initiative (see "Federal structures"). More recently, they have insisted on marching in the city centre on Christmas Eve.

15 Lobster, or crayfish as it is referred to in South Africa, has become an expensive delicacy in recent years, whereas in the past it was cheap food that the working classes enjoyed. As Cape Town is a peninsula partially surrounded by the sea, many locals worked in or were connected to the local fishing industry and used to have ample access to crayfish, which is no longer the case.

16 The details of the competition and the prescribed pieces are described in Chapter 5.

17 Since members of the Christmas bands community do not live in the city, some bands prefer marching in communities where their members live. For a few years they opted to march on the second or third Sunday of December in Mitchell's Plain, a large neighbourhood designed during apartheid to accommodate displaced coloured people.

18 The media historically portrayed working-class coloured people and their expressive practices in this way.

19 Whereas the more commonly known minstrel troupes are the antithesis of respectability, as carnival is about upturning the social norms and mores, the Malay choirs and Christmas bands subscribe very strongly to the notion of respectability.

20 The name of the Wynberg Progress Christmas Band, which claims to have been established in 1915, remains an example of this influence.

21 This section draws on the work done by Jennifer Pearce (1985) in her Honours thesis at the University of Cape Town.

22 It had increased its membership to 50 000 by the 1950s (Lewis 1987, 14).

23 This was a despicable system in which part of their weekly wages was paid in alcohol.

24 The International Order of True Templars urged its members to vote and campaigned for the extension of the black franchise from 1899 (Lewis 1987, 14).

25 Victorian novelist, poet, Christian Socialist and Cambridge professor (Uffelman 2002).

26 The Salvation Army Southern Africa Territory: Regional Presence, 2015.

27 Originally from Ghana, Peregrino was educated in England, and came to South Africa in 1900, where he established the *South African Spectator*, a fortnightly newspaper for blacks. He became involved in business ventures and political organisations and played a significant role in shaping the views of the early coloured political organisations that emerged in the Cape at the turn of the twentieth century (Lewis 1987, 16–18).

28 An associate of Peregrino, Tobin was a local businessman and one of the founder members of the APO. Their open-air meetings were held near landmark boulders in District Six.

29 Although it had African in its name, it was essentially a coloured political organisation (see Chapter 1).

30 Since they were, strictly speaking, not members of the minstrel troupes, they were considered hired personnel and, unlike the members, received payment for their participation.

31 This can vary from one band to the next. Mr Fred de Kock of Young Guiding Stars mentioned how essential these visits were in their band. He perceived the band as ministering God's word (FdK 01/31/08).

32 In their study of a Ghanaian brass band, Boonzajer-Flaes and Gales (n.d., 49) suggest that "quarrels and a more or less ritualized friction are an important element in the life of the band."

33 I later found out that, before I had joined, she had been the only female member, participating in the role of secretary of the band. She returned to the band along with her husband and at the next AGM she was unanimously elected as secretary, a position she held until April 2011.

34 Sometimes the wives of wayward or uncooperative husbands take the opportunity to complain to the band leadership at the annual visitations of their struggles with their husbands.

35 Published by The Sun Records, 1974, recording under his "Dollar Brand" name. In a radio interview on Fine Music Radio (15 February 2013), Abdullah Ibrahim praised the Christmas bands for inspiring his compositions.

3

The St Joseph's Christmas Band

I continue the ethnographic discussion by presenting a historical sketch of the St Joseph's Christmas Band (hereafter, St Joseph's), gleaned from several interviews with Mr September (25/07/01; 16/05/05; 10/10/08), and biographical sketches of certain band members. I am particularly interested in some of the members in leadership positions of the band and highlight the role of the founder member, Mr Hannes September. These members' involvement in the cultural practice has allowed for a deep reflection on themselves and their aspirations for self-improvement as musicians, as band members and as human beings.

St Joseph's was established in 1936 in Constantia, emerging out of the Christmas choir of Mr September's family (see below in his biographical sketch). As a 16-year-old, he added strings to the vocal ensemble and later met up with some instrumentalists with whom he formed the instrumental band. The band operated somewhat more formally from 1940 and gathered at the home of Wally Langford in Govender's Lane in Newlands for a while. The founding members were Hannes September, Andrew September (Hannes's cousin), Wally Ross, "Dokkie" Arendse, John Pelston and Peter Crow (violins), Wally Langford (banjo), "Blou" Benjamin (accordion), John Jacobs (guitar), Jan Allieda (cello) and William Jephtha (chairperson). The band established their clubhouse at the home of Mr William Jephtha in King Street, Newlands, in the 1940s, well before the Group Areas Act of 1956 forcibly removed the coloured residents and declared it a "white area". Some of these founder members were older men and "seasoned musicians" who also played in dance bands. The young Hannes, then in his late teens, respected these men and they, in turn, respected him and Andrew September for their interest and dedication to music, teaching them about music in general, and dance band music in particular. Back then, members joined a Christmas band in their neighbourhood and would come together for a few weeks from October to November to practise Christmas carols. They performed in their neighbourhoods to family and friends on Christmas Eve, Christmas day, and two

Sundays after New Year. In those early years, St Joseph's grew into a small band of about 16 men and that was the extent of their organisation for the year. They would re-emerge later in that year to perform the same annual ritual.[1]

Since the men were not always ready and willing to practise on sunny Sunday afternoons in November, preferring to play dominoes instead at a games clubhouse opposite the band's clubhouse, Hannes and Andrew, who did not live in Newlands, often went all the way in vain. Being rather ambitious about forming a band and playing music together, in the following year they decided to take the Christmas band to their own neighbourhood, Wynberg, to which they had recently moved. In October 1943, eight members came along with them and they built the band to a membership of thirty in that first year. They won the "solo" category for the first time on 25 February 1945.[2] The band remained in Brent Road, Wynberg, where both cousins lived a few houses from each other, until 1973. By that time, St Joseph's had 60 to 70 members.

Hannes September, whose house became the clubhouse, was the undisputed leader of the band. When he moved to Fairways in 1973, the clubhouse was established in Fairways, where it remained until 2012 when Mr September, then in his 90s, became too frail to lead it and his eldest son Albert took over the helm. St Joseph's grew to be a phenomenal Christmas band with a membership of over 100: the musical band of between 30 and 40 members winning the "solo" category in the annual City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union competitions for nine years consecutively, from 1974 to 1982. They are still one of the top bands in the City and Suburban Union, with Wynberg Progress Christmas Band being their arch rival. They have been less successful in the SAUCBB competitions, which are extremely competitive, with many more bands competing, although they usually compete in the "A" Competitions and often win a few trophies. They are still revered as a good musical band by other band members, as I witnessed when visiting other bands and after having been a member of St Joseph's for a number of years. Their motto is "Trust in the Lord," which is engraved onto the club badge, and they often remind themselves of their motto when matters become somewhat problematic in the organisation.

Biographical sketches of band members

Hannes September: Founder and "father" of the band

Mr Hannes September, who was the oldest member of the band when he died at the age of 94 on 8 July 2015, was a son of farm workers. His parents and grandparents worked on one of Cape Town's premiere wine farms, the Hohenhort Estate in Constantia. He grew up in a musical home; he describes his father as a good banjo player and his aunts as good singers. At Christmas time, the adults went around their

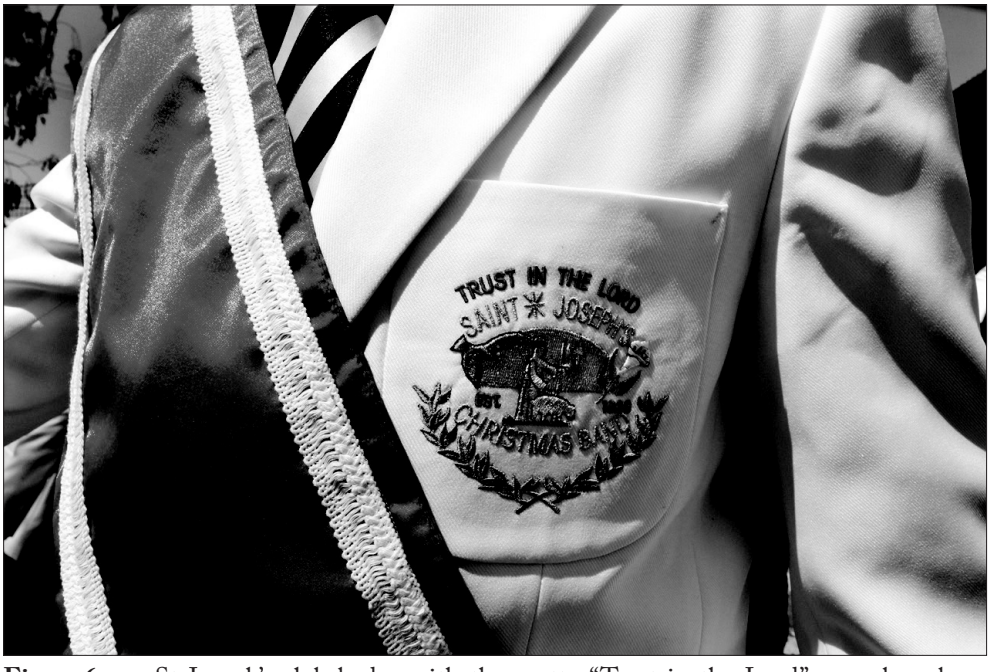


Figure 6 St Joseph's club badge with the motto "Trust in the Lord" worn here by a *voorloper* with a red sash across the blazer.

neighbourhood singing Christmas carols to the extended family and neighbours. As a child, the young Hannes wanted to join the grown-ups but he was told that he was too young. At the age of 15, his dad taught him to play a few chords on the banjo and he would play for hours, familiarising himself with the instrument. Learning to play an instrument at that age was unusual at the time, as the custom was to teach young men in their late teens or early 20s. He was acutely aware of the privilege afforded him just to hold the banjo in his hands at that age.

As a child, Hannes September had a natural curiosity for music and wanted to become a musician, but as the son of farm workers, he knew it was a dream not easily realised. By the age of 20, he was playing the violin together with his cousin Andrew, who was five years older than he was. They formed a strong partnership that lasted until the death of Andrew September in 2004, participating in joint activities such as attending the Church Lads' Brigade and establishing the St Joseph's Christmas Band along with the older musicians when Hannes was only 18 years old. He started experimenting with the idea of playing Christmas carols on string instruments by introducing them into the Christmas choir in which his parents and aunts sang annually, but he was not satisfied until he found some "seasoned musicians" with whom he could perform. In the early years of formal organisation, the Christmas bands consisted of string instruments only. Mr September learned

to play the saxophone in his early twenties and introduced the instrument into the string ensemble, following the Young Guiding Stars, who introduced the inclusion of saxophones in the Christmas bands. Since the 1950s, the Christmas bands have consisted of horns accompanied by a string section.

The Salvation Army wind bands, visible in the middle-class neighbourhoods of Claremont and Diep River, inspired the young Hannes in the early 1930s. These bands exuded a middle-class sophistication through their smart uniforms and shiny brass instruments, which were apparently much more expensive than the strings. He was not interested in learning to read music, so he was not enticed to join the Salvation Army bands, where it was compulsory. Nevertheless, he saved up money to buy himself a saxophone, but once he started playing it, he realised that he needed a deeper understanding of music. "It was only when I bought myself a saxophone and I was playing with people, I discovered that, no man, this is a different type of key that these people are playing" (HS2 05/16/05). After taking lessons on the saxophone from an experienced player, still playing by ear, he became involved with performing in other musical practices commonly heard in the city, such as Malay choirs and *langarm* (social ballroom) dance bands. His passion for music is evident in his candid reflections:

> I can still remember when I come from work. At that time, I was so fond of that saxophone, when it comes to half past four, then I am already ready to go home because I want to be with my saxophone and as soon as I come home, I wash myself and I sit with that saxophone from 6 o'clock until about 11 o'clock at night. (HS2 05/16/05)

He led the Savoy *Dance* Band for some 20-odd years, including in its personnel some members of St Joseph's. His band performed at the end-of-year picnics where musicians provided dance music, as well as at parties, weddings and Sunday parties, where they played hymns and gospel music. Mr September expressed a powerful desire to be in a leadership position:

HS: We were still amateurs at that time but I wanted to be a leader. At all times I wanted to be a leader. At all times. (HS2 05/16/05)

He learned to read music eventually and the rest of the band followed suit.[3] It seems that Wallace Witbooi, the captain, bandmaster and musical arranger for many years, was the driving force behind getting band members to learn to read musical scores:

HS: He taught, in his way, to let you understand what music is all about, how to play the instrument and the chords and everything, if you play guitar or banjo. He was actually above everyone as far as talent is concerned. He has a gift. We made him captain. He was captain for all these years.

SB: So when did people start reading for the competitions? When did it become the norm?

HS: There was a time in the nineties when we decided we are going to play with music now because all these youngsters now today can't play by ear. They learn at universities and things. I told them if you are going to play with music, we were playing with music already. We were the first band that walked in the street, Christmas choir, with sheet music. This was a different type of man [Wallace Witbooi]. We were all playing in jazz and dance bands in those days. He was very fond of having everything being played as it should be. Now if you play that type of music by ear, then each one wants to play it his own way and he was very strict on that. When you play a hymn, he doesn't want you to mess around. You can always hear, when we are playing by ear, he will directly come and tell you [that] you are messing up the thing. "Don't think you are playing good. You are messing up the thing. Play according to what was written down." If we are playing with music and there is one who plays his own thing, putting his own thing in, he will tell you "I don't like this or that, don't slur the thing. Play strictly as it should be."

SB: So Wallace was very strict about how people should play. Did he set down a lot of rules?

HS: Well, he was the captain at all times. He writes down the music and we play according to what he has given. (HS2 05/16/05)

These interview excerpts with Mr September are quite illuminating in terms of what Foucault refers to as "technologies of the self" and "disciplinary practices". Although Foucault's genealogy of "technologies of the self" is rooted in Greco-Roman Antiquity (Foucault 2003c in Rabinow and Rose 2003, 145–179), the focus on daily practices of the self, which was evident in Marcus Aurelius's letter to Fronto (cited in Rabinow and Rose 2003, 153–154), seem equally important to Mr Hannes September in his care of himself and his instrument as well as in his intense desire to progress musically. This expression of and desire for "self-formation of the subject" coincides with what Foucault (cited in Rabinow and Rose 2003, 26) describes as "ascetic practice" and defines as "an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being." For Mr September, this "mode of being" was not only to be a musician, but also "to be a leader at all times." This desire for self-formation of the subject is also apparent in his approval of the disciplinary practices introduced by the captain, Wallace Witbooi, who is depicted as "a different type of man."

Wallace Witbooi: Bandmaster

The late Mr Wallace (Wally) Witbooi had been the bandmaster of St Joseph's for more than 20 years. I heard about him from various community musicians who informed me of his great skill as an arranger of band music. Mr Witbooi grew up in a family that enjoyed making music together. His grandfather had a mixed-voice choir in which his family members participated. As a child, the young Wally was "fascinated with music," in particular with harmony. He vividly remembers a "church social" in which members of the church performed music for each other. Especially memorable were three elderly women, dressed in white dresses with red roses, who sang *The Nun's Chorus* harmonising together and sounding "like angels." That night he went home and tried to figure out the harmonies they had sung.

Mr Witbooi was self-taught. He described how music was part of his childhood play in which he made instruments such as violins and guitars based on real models, and getting his friends together in a choir to sing in tonic sol-fa to satisfy his curiosity concerning harmony. His main resource was the Alexander Hymn Book No 3 (Alexander 1909), which was written in tonic sol-fa. He claimed that he figured out this system on his own in his youth.

WW: Later on, as I became older I got hold of the Alexander No 3 Hymn Book which was tonic sol-fa and then I taught myself to read *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do* and then I'd go over these parts in the book and then I'd do the alto and the tenor parts. I could remember very well, you know, and I used to record those things in my mind and then when I used to get together with my cousins, I'd tell them you sing that line, you sing that line, and I'll sing this line. And then I was fascinated with the beautiful harmonies that were formed. (WW 06/26/05)

His uncle, who was a few years older than he was, inspired him, as he played musical instruments. When his uncle started to work, he bought himself a guitar, which the young Wally would "steal" while his uncle was at work, so teaching himself to play. His grandmother bought him his first instrument, a violin, which she found at a local pawnshop. He joined St Joseph's at the age of nine, playing the violin, "already a musician", as Mr Hannes September often reminded the band. This was quite unusual, as most children who joined the band learned to play instruments in the band and often paraded for a few years before they joined the men playing in the musical band. He played the violin until the age of 14, but had simultaneously learned to play the guitar and banjo. As the violin was stigmatised as an instrument played by old people, he gave it up for more "hip" instruments; by the time he was 17, he was learning to play the tenor saxophone. Again, his curiosity and desire to play

instruments led him to "steal" his uncle's saxophone every day for four days while his uncle was at work. After the fourth day, he was able to play the saxophone and a week later he joined Mr Hannes September in the Savoy Dance Band when one of their regular tenor saxophonists did not show up for rehearsals. Being able to play with the "big guys" really excited him. Thereafter, he played with several local bands and Malay choirs. His most successful performances were with the Ikey Gamba Dance Band (IGDB) and the Harmony Kings.

The IGDB played in the distinctive style of the English dance band leader, Victor Sylvester. Here again, it was the beautiful harmonies and tight arrangements that attracted Mr Witbooi to the music and he soon tried his hand at arranging music for the band. His favourite jazz musician was Glenn Miller, whose sound he tried to capture. The IGDB was extremely popular in Cape Town for many years. Because they were a formidable competitor in the dance band competitions, winning the best band trophy each year, the organisers eventually asked them not to participate. Their constant winning was not good for competition! (from an early interview with Ikey Gamba, founder of the band, 07/24/01). One of the highlights of IGDB's career was performing "authentic Indian music" for an Indian musical (WW 06/26/05). During his years with IGDB, Mr Witbooi figured out musical notation. This started with writing down the letter-names of the notes, until he was able to read staff notation without this assistance. He seems to have had perfect pitch since he did not work with an instrument such as a piano as a reference like his fellow band arrangers, but was able to recognise the note by its sound.

> I could just hear it and I know which chord to put in and I write the harmonies accordingly. Ikey used to sit at the piano and many times I used to listen and I hear *pling plung, pling plung*. Then I tell him to play C or F or whatever and then they say, "Yes, that is the note, that is the chord. (WW 06/26/05)

Harmony Kings was a very popular big band, "the first coloured band to play on Springbok Radio"[4] and was nominated for the *Sarie* Awards[5] in the big band category. Mr Witbooi's preference was the IGDB, as they were "very jazz oriented," while the Harmony Kings were "very flat and stiff." He played with the IGDB for several years.

Mr Witbooi became the captain of St Joseph's in his early 20s. Under his captaincy, the band became a formidable competitor in the annual union competitions. He later gave up the captaincy and became bandmaster instead, concentrating solely on the music.

> I was getting scared of it, to be quite honest, because there were a lot of rumours going around. People don't like me, man…We used to win year after year and we were constant, first or second, [it] was always like that. People didn't like that. The result was that a lot of guys got jealous because of that. Then I thought to myself that here I must give way… (WW 06/26/05)

The role of the captain is a more generalised one than that of the bandmaster, although the latter seems to be a fairly new position in the bands. The captain is perceived as the general organiser of the band's activities. He sets the dates and times of rehearsals, sees to the discipline of the band, particularly on the road marches during the season. The bandmaster's sole responsibility revolves around the music. He chooses the music for the band, arranges it for the particular instrumentation of the band at the time, and then rehearses it by conducting the band. While the bandmaster is more responsible for discipline during rehearsals, the captain often endorses this. Before the institution of the role of the bandmaster, the captain fulfilled all these obligations. These two executive positions are wrapped up in the activities of the band surrounding music making and parading, and together they are almost emblematic of the band itself. The chairperson of the band, on the other hand, represents the official face of the band.[6]

Chris Petersen: Captain

Chris Petersen joined St Joseph's as a teenager and was captain of the band from 1990 to 2006. He loved music as a young child and taught himself to play the guitar. His family was involved with Christmas bands. While his grandfather was a member of Young Guiding Stars, his father was a supporter of St Joseph's, where he took his three sons as teenagers. When a trombone was donated to the band, Chris took the opportunity to learn a wind instrument. Always very keen to learn to read music fluently, he looked upon it as a way of improving himself. He bought himself a trombone tutor[7] and taught himself to play the instrument.

> I always wanted to be able to pick up music and read music and thinking now joining that band, St Joseph's, will make me that person…I wanted to pick up any music score and be able to read it and be able to transpose it. (CS 9/11/06)

He maintained this keen interest in music, studying at various informal music schools and playing trombone in a well-known local jazz big band, The Biggish Jazz Band, for a few years. He also developed an interest in writing and arranging music, the latter for the Christmas bands. Various technical skills and computer programmes such as *Finale* have made him an invaluable member of the band regarding musical arrangement. He joined the executive, initially as assistant secretary in his early 20s. His desire to be the captain was fulfilled in 1990 when he was elected captain, a position he held for 16 years:

> When I started in the band, I always wanted to be the captain one day. I always said it to myself, I want to be the captain; I want to be the captain. As time went on, about 15 years ago, they elected me as captain of the band and that is always what I wanted to be. (CS 09/11/06)

As before, the sense of self-improvement is evident here. Mr Petersen served as the assistant bandmaster and later bandmaster (first when the bandmaster resigned and later after his death), where his music literacy, and arrangement and computer skills were certainly appreciated.

Anthony Tockley:[8] Chairperson

Anthony Tockley held the position of chairperson of St Joseph's for about 20 years. He comes from a family thoroughly rooted in the Christmas Bands Movement. His father was a stalwart of St Joseph's and several of his family members were active in the band until 2014.[9] He started attending the band's activities as a six-year-old and remained an active member, except for a period of two years when he had a disagreement with the band. Unlike most members who have been involved for such a length of time, Mr Tockley never learned to play an instrument. Instead, he followed the route of a *voorloper* (drum major), starting as a "junior" and ending up as the "senior" *voorloper* for many years. He defines the role of the drum major as "leading the squad wherever it's going." This is an extremely important role and must be performed with much energy and discipline. The whole band's performance is dependent on the character and deportment of the drum major. A slack performance by the drum major can cost the band a vital position in the competitions in the categories of the "grand march past" and the "best drum major".

Mr Tockley was drawn into the executive structure of the band as secretary of the band at the age of 18 years and became involved at union level in his early 20s. He soon served the union as assistant secretary, after which he became the secretary and remained in this official position for more than two decades. Anthony Tockley is an extremely dedicated and disciplined Christmas band member and his loyalties, unlike those of many other members of St Joseph's, lay with the entire movement, rather than with a single band. His commitment and crucial position in St Joseph's and the Christmas Bands Movement as a whole was thoroughly endorsed when, after a stroke that left him partially paralysed on his right side and with slightly defective speech, he was re-elected in both positions as chairperson of St Joseph's and secretary of the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union.

Sharon Tockley: Secretary

Mrs Tockley is proud of her legacy of being the first female member of St Joseph's. She joined the band in 2001 after Mr Witbooi and Mr Noble approached her to be the secretary of the band. In the past, since her marriage to Anthony Tockley in 1992, she had assisted with little jobs: "I was always involved but silently…There were many things I did that people never knew about. I didn't want to be involved.

I did many things without the members knowing" (ST 12/08/2008). The need for this involvement emerged after the band mother, Mrs September, Hannes September's wife, became ill and too frail to assist with the organisation of the band. Although the men made all the decisions concerning the band, Mr and Mrs September were the ones who implemented most of the decisions. Mrs Tockley's formal membership in the band was not unproblematic: "In the beginning, some people were very surprised. Some people were happy and some people were taken aback because St Joseph's never had women" (ST 12/08/2008). Nevertheless, since she joined as an executive member, not an ordinary member, the female supporters somehow accepted her position in the band. The male members respected her and she naturally fell into the role of taking care of the children on the road marches and the general organisation of the band's activities. Although she was quite strict with the children, they too had a lot of respect for her.

When I interviewed her, she was not quite convinced about the presence of women in the bands. She felt that it sometimes affected the bands negatively when people partnered as couples in the band, which influenced their commitment, so that if one of the partners was dissatisfied, both would leave the band. Nevertheless, Mrs Tockley was a very committed and hard-working member of the band and pulled together many loose ends during stressful competition times. The executive members took her commitment as the secretary of the band for granted: "Whatever must be ordered, whatever must be done, I must get it together. But I'm not on the [uniform] committee" (ST 12/08/2008). Sometimes her stress around competition time and especially on competition days was quite visible through her emotional demeanour. After all the organisational mechanisms put in place to coordinate competitions, she could rely on only a small core of executive members to pull it together and deliver a stylishly dressed, well-organised Christmas band on competition days.

Peter Noble: Treasurer

Peter Noble is a self-taught musician whose family were members of the Christmas bands. He grew up in Wynberg, near the clubhouse of St Joseph's, and even though his father was in a different band, his grandmother was an ardent St Joseph's supporter and insisted that her grandson become a member of that band. He learned to play the guitar by being taught a few basic chords by the older men and later bought himself a tutor from which he learned more intricate chords. Next came the banjo, piano accordion, the saxophones and tuba – all of which he taught himself. He also taught himself to read staff notation from music tutors.

In his late teens, he became the secretary of St Joseph's for a while. He became assistant treasurer, apprenticing Mr September, until he took over as the treasurer for at least 15 years. In his later years, he was the auditor of the band, and even when

his son, Glenton Noble, was treasurer, he ran a tight ship regarding the assets of St Joseph's. Two of his sons and a grandson were members of St Joseph's when I was researching the band. They were some of the most musical members and stalwarts of the musical band at competition time, a legacy of which he is very proud.

He is also proud of the bands he established or assisted with at their inception, where he taught members to play instruments. He established a music school in his garage on Friday nights where he taught many members of St Joseph's to play instruments. The culture of the Christmas bands is important to him and he believes that members should work actively in their communities to find new members and supporters of the bands. He is particularly keen that the children should be roped into the band's activities throughout the year, not only at the important annual rituals at the beginning of the year. The weekly music lessons, besides providing the necessary skills for performance, also provide the space for the children and youth to get to know each other, and grow up together to nurture the solidarity necessary for the future leaders of the band. Although he says that competitions are the main attraction – "a lot of youngsters think it's for the silverware" – he feels that Christmas bands instil a love of music in the children.

Cecil Tookley: Senior drum major

Mr Tookley joined the Christmas bands as an adult, first the Young Guiding Stars, but then he switched to St Joseph's since most of his family and children were in that band. He started by assisting their youngsters with drilling and marching, aspects of the Christmas bands that he thoroughly enjoys: "I love marching." He learned to do this in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Brigades, where he was a bugler and became the youngest captain of the entire DRC Brigade regiment at the age of 15. He comes from a family of drum majors – "drum major is in our family" – and proudly lists their lineage: his brother, his nephew (Anthony Tockley), two of his sons and grandsons. His family was prominent in St Joseph's, with almost 20 of them in the band at one stage. During our interview, he showed me photographs and trophies to prove their mettle.

Mr Tookley is serious about competitions and participates to win: "I like winning." St Joseph's won the "grand march past" at the board competitions for three years running when he was the drum major. Marching in platoon formation requires extreme discipline and he is the consummate disciplinarian. He trains the children relentlessly on several Saturdays before competitions and uses the Sunday road marches as another practice session in preparation for the competitions. He walks beside them wielding a switch, usually tapping on the ground beside them to indicate that they are tiring, occasionally shouting instructions and reminders. He believes that winning the "grand march past" depends on the drum major, who should "walk

in a tempo that the squad…must feel." It is no good to have a nice squad but a lazy drum major – that may get you the third place but not an outright win.

He prefers the captain to be strict about keeping the rules regarding participating in the competition: "If you don't practise, you can't participate." This makes his role as the trainer of the squads so much easier; he does not have to make those decisions but he can support them wholeheartedly. Nevertheless, he really feels badly when eager children come on competition day, expecting to participate in the various categories, only to be told that since they had not come to the last few practices, they were ruled out of the squad. Similarly, when the children's squads (tiny tots and juniors) do well and they are elated by their win, he feels extreme pride in them and the work he has done. Because he works so much with the children, he is concerned that the band does not arrange activities for them during the year when the annual activities have come to an end. He feels that to keep the children in the band, it needs to reach out to them by providing activities that they may not otherwise enjoy due to their economic circumstances. To this end, he has been instrumental in organising outings to the beach and *braais* (barbeques), especially after the competitions, as a vote of thanks to the children for their hard work during preparations.

In these few biographical narratives, the members reveal their ardent devotion to the cultural phenomenon of the Christmas bands in general, and St Joseph's in particular. Inevitably, their lives are wrapped up in its organisation and its annual rituals.

Embodied subjectivity

In this ethnographic construction of the St Joseph's Christmas Band, a few details about their discursive practices can be highlighted to illuminate how the bands create themselves as collectives through which the members constitute their subjectivity, and vice versa, for there seems to be a mutual influence on the constitution of the subjectivity of the members both as individuals and as a collective. This emerged particularly forcefully in an interview with Brian de Wet, President of the City and Suburban Union, "a militarist" by admission, who is a Warrant Officer in the South African Air Force. His father and uncles started the Good Hope Christmas Band and, like many of his contemporaries, as a young child he "found himself in the band and that was it." He realised as a young man that "this band thing is not for me, when they were all drinking." However, he decided, "because it is a family thing, it's a traditional thing, we've got to stay in this thing. I always said to myself, if I have the privilege to be the captain of this band I'd sort out this drinking problem of people, man. I'll stop it and I'll try and sort out the discipline in bands" (BdW 03/30/07). Although he never became captain of the band, he held a much more prominent

position in the Christmas Bands Movement from 1994 to 2012 as president of a union, where he wielded his influence over several bands.

Christmas bands are hierarchical organisations with an executive body charged with the leadership of the organisation and a general membership that annually (or biennially, in some instances) elects the executive and accepts their leadership on matters, although their guidance is always open for contestation by the membership. The executive is also hierarchical in its structure, with the chairperson perceived as the most authoritative member. The unions and boards work in a similarly hierarchical manner. There seems to be a reciprocal influence on members' subjectivities as individuals and as collectives: certain strong personalities with sound moral principles influence individual bands and the bands, in turn, affect individuals. These strong personalities are often elected onto executive structures and drive the ethical agenda of the entire Christmas Bands Movement.

Besides the authority vested in the executive members, the Life President, usually the longest-serving member and often the founder and "father" of the band, is also a historical authority and is deferred to in matters of extreme sensitivity or where creativity is needed for considering unusual matters arising in their everyday practice.[10] Mr Hannes September has been the Life President for many years. He is recognised as the cultural repository of St Joseph's and the Christmas Bands Movement as a whole. His interventions in disputes are sought by the members and appreciated when given in the general meetings. He is particularly sensitive to friction caused by unnecessary interfering in the portfolios of the executive members and losing membership through careless words or actions. He therefore often gives advice about how to behave and about what is expected of a Christmas band member. This hierarchy in the bands, along with their codes of dress and conduct, the division of the membership into age-group categories, the annual rituals, and the musical repertoire are some of the "normalising practices" established by the Christmas bands.

In his deliberations on the notion of embodied subjectivity, Foucault is concerned with large-scale institutions. He asserts that the construction of knowledge/truth is not only constitutive of relations of power (Atkins 2005), but shapes the way the subject is constituted and how "normalising practices" are produced. I find these theoretical concepts particularly pertinent to the Christmas Bands Movement. In their organisational practices, Christmas bands have adopted meeting procedures that are commonly operative within volunteer and other social organisations. As a social institution, the Christmas Bands Movement has constructed its own "normalising practices" to produce "disciplined bodies" for musical ministry as "soldiers of God", and for competitive display (see Chapter 5). Their "disciplinary practices" include a repertoire of military gestures, musical training, and the explicit maintenance of discipline and order on the road marches and in the training sessions. Through their

"truth making", they construct a collective subjectivity that is given salience through their collective, embodied experiences as witnessed in their annual rituals.

Notes

1 Christmas bands that operate in this limited manner nowadays are derogatorily referred to as Christmas tree bands, suggesting that they pop up around Christmas time like Christmas trees (CS 19/07/2001).

2 Albert September, eldest son of Hannes September, commented that this date is well remembered in the family, as it was the day he was born. Mr September also tells the story of how his wife, experiencing labour contractions, noticed how unhappy he looked not to be with the band on competition day and suggested that he rather go and enjoy himself than spend an unhappy time with her (HS4 01/19/07).

3 I discuss contradictory attitudes towards musical literacy amongst the leadership still prevalent in the Christmas bands in Chapter 4.

4 Established in 1955, Springbok Radio was the first commercial radio station in South Africa, and existed for 35 years (Springbok Radio 2016).

5 The *Sarie* Awards were the national music awards under apartheid.

6 I return to a more detailed discussion of these two roles in Chapter 4.

7 Music tutors are guidebooks for learning to read music and play an instrument. There are tutors available for every instrument and often used by self-taught musicians.

8 A misspelling on his birth certificate has rendered him Tockley rather than Tookley, like the rest of his family.

9 His wife was the secretary and his brother assistant secretary for many years, while his uncle was the "senior" drum major and still trains the squad in drilling. More generations of nieces, nephews and grandchildren formed part of the tiny tot and junior membership.

10 For example, the special leadership role of the Life President emerged strongly during the deliberations on allowing females to become active members participating in the performance activities of the band. I discuss this fully in Chapter 6.

4

From oral/aural to literate: Musical transmission in the Christmas bands

> There is hardly an oral culture or a predominantly oral culture left in the world today that is not somehow aware of the vast complex of powers forever inaccessible without literacy. This awareness is agony for persons rooted in primary orality, who want literacy passionately but who also know very well that moving into the exciting world of literacy means leaving behind much that is exciting and deeply loved in the earlier oral world. We have to die to continue living. (Ong 1988, 15)

In the past, Christmas band members passed on their musical skills and knowledge orally and generationally, from father to son, uncle to nephew, older brother to younger and so forth. They were minimally trained and musical literacy was not emphasised; in fact, they hardly read music, which was often preferred. This informal learning seemed to have sufficed for many years and they only appeared to need more expert advice when they prepared for their annual competitions. In this chapter, I again rely on my intense involvement with the St Joseph's Christmas Band (hereafter St Joseph's) to explicate the intricacies of musical learning and literacy and its changing nature within the Christmas Bands Movement. I suggest that much of their attitude and subjective experiences around learning in the early years can be related to deep psychological reverberations connected to their slave and fraught past in segregationist colonial South Africa. I then continue to explore learning within other bands in a comparative manner and finally focus on younger members who have learned somewhat differently from the customary methods and are currently having an impact on musical learning, literacy and performance within the bands.

St Joseph's is known to be a formidable contender in the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union's annual competitions, particularly in the "solo" category. Valmont Layne, former Director of Cape Town's District Six Museum,[1] initially

told me about them and was at pains to point out their talented arranger and band director, Wally Witbooi who, he felt, was responsible for their commanding status in the band community. Members of other bands commented on St Joseph's musical prowess during my first year of involvement with the band in 2004, in my presence and apparently for my benefit. Supporters of the band, not necessarily connected to the band via membership, often came to me at the competitions and expressed their appreciation for my working with such a good band – I could not have chosen a better band, it seemed.

The band meets for music rehearsals twice or thrice a week for three or four months in preparation for the competitions and once or twice a month the rest of the year, with a break between June and August. If they have a performance coming up in these winter months and want to perform new pieces, they may practise once or twice a week beforehand. During the season, drill and marching practice happens once a week in a long session on a Saturday afternoon and the Sunday parades are also used as practices for marching; less so for music, as the many hours of parading and playing simultaneously leave the musical band members rather exhausted and their embouchures tired.

Despite their fairly rigorous schedule and even though the members generally play from music, most of them are only minimally musically literate and some of the older members do not read staff notation at all. The bandmaster arranges the music for the band in staff notation nevertheless, and writes out the parts for each instrumental section: trumpets and clarinets, first and second alto saxophones, tenor and baritone saxophones, trombones and tuba.

Besides the wind instruments, guitars, banjos, piano accordion, violoncello and (occasionally) violins may form part of the band. The violins traditionally carried the melody in the bands, until the 1960s when saxophones and trumpets took over that role; the other string instruments played an accompanying role. An instrument rarely found in the bands in the last forty years, the violin enjoyed a revival for a while during the mid-2000s. Although not back to its former prominence, certain bands have reintroduced the instrument to their younger members. In Star of Glad Tidings from Elsies River, for example, some of the young members play it in the Philharmonic Youth Orchestra.[2] The string accompaniment and piano accordion are referred to as the "background". However, this "background", which plays a largely rhythmic role, can also include wind instruments not involved in playing the main melody and harmony as well as carrying introductions and interludes.

The music is written in staff notation but some members (or the bandmaster) write out the letter names of the notes above the staff as an *aide-memoire*. This practice is referred to as reading ABCs or even more disparagingly as *aaptaal* (ape language).[3] The musicians usually read music from music stands and they generally feel that reading

music makes the band look and sound professional. They contend that only through reading music can they truly understand (or be "seen to" understand) the music, play together and sound as one. Using *aaptaal* detracts from the professionalism they wish to portray and differentiates the "real musicians" in the band from those who are not. This attitude expresses deep social aspirations that are attached to musical literacy and a respectable presentation of the self to the world. They may also be influenced by practice in the Salvation Army and Moravian brass bands, which foster musical literacy and are certainly bands to aspire to musically. Reading from staff notation is clearly a deeply significant issue that influences both the musical and social status of the bands.[4] Mr Hannes September makes a link between the Salvation Army and reading music, and sheds light on the instruments:

HS: My auntie was staying in Claremont and whenever I go to visit them on a Sunday morning or afternoon, you will see the Salvation Army band there. That was brass bands. There was one band in Diep River that had a brass band. At that time people were not interested in saxophones and trumpets because those things were too expensive.

SB: That was still in the 40s?

HS: No, actually the 20s. In the 40s there was already saxophones [in the Christmas bands].

SB: Oh, so it was 20s and 30s?

HS: I'm talking about the early 20s. At that time there were only string bands with string instruments like violins, guitars, banjos and accordions.

SB: Mandolins? Were mandolins part of the band?

HS: That was one of the big instruments they used to use. Most of them were playing mandolins and banjos.

SB: So did you join a Salvation Army band?

HS: No, I didn't join them because there you had to read music and I wasn't interested to read music. Everything was by ear. (HS 05/16/05)

In the same interview, he further explains his preference for non-reading, even though, ironically, he pioneered reading music in the band in his later years.

SB: So the competitions were played by ear?

HS: Yes, competitions we played by ear.

SB: What kind of music did you play then?

HS: It was more difficult than this type of music we are playing today. It is

amazing how a person, by ear, can pick up. I think written music is so easy if they know their instrument, they don't learn. They just play the notes there and carry on, because the notes are there at all times. They don't learn, they just see it there.

SB: And they don't practise.

HS: That's the thing. What you learn by ear, whatever you pick up, you will never forget it!

This excerpt echoes the paragraph by Walter Ong (1988) quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Mr September certainly lived this dilemma of the oral/aural versus literate musician and these issues were not easily resolved, even after years of being musically literate. He recalls the way the band learned their competition pieces from the formidable piano teacher, Mrs Ulster (née Theunissen):

SB: How did people learn then? Who trained the band? What would they play?

HS: When we started, there was a lady, Miss Theunissen, she sits behind the piano. Now she comes to the soprano part, she plays the soprano part. Then, after that, now we come to the alto. Now this is your part. This hand plays soprano part, this hand plays the alto, that note and that note. Now after she is finished she wants you two to compare. You play alto, I play tenor. Now when we are finished, she is entirely finished with us for the night. Now the tenor part, then the alto, soprano and bass, four parts. Now I'm telling you if there is anybody in the room that laughs or makes a noise. We were sitting there like children; we mustn't even look at one another. When she is done with the first and second session, you two have to remember what you have learned there and you sit and sing, sing in your mind all the time. That section there, whatever it is, they sit and sing there. Their mind is entirely focused on what they have learned. Now the others come in. Now you imagine how it goes. We all sit in one small little room like this. Now before the night is over, all four of us, different voices, we play together. Then it was now the way we sort out our solo parts. Then next week we start again. Now we go a little bit further. Then later we put those sixteen bars together and go home. If you go home, you can still ask for your part. Then she'll give you your part. Just walk, don't talk. Just go home with that in your mind.

SB: So you learned a little bit, you go home; you go and practise that for the week. Then next week you learn a bit more?

HS: Two nights a week.

SB: Oh, you come two nights a week to practise?

HS: Yah, Mondays and Thursdays.

SB: Oh, so you just practise that short bit for the next time and then you practise a bit more till the next time?

HS: [Yes.] Not like here where you come with a piece of music and then you start by eight o'clock and then by ten o'clock the whole thing is finished. You learn nothing by it! The music is in front of you. We played different types of music by ear at that time. It was beautiful. They could never, never understand why we were so good at it! (HS2 05/16/05)

This passage is significant for various reasons: it illustrates the early formalised efforts at musical transmission in the bands; the attitude of Mr September regarding musical literacy; the attitude of the band members towards the music teacher; a perception of "infantilisation", which they have internalised, a consequence of slavery and the paternalism of slave owners; and the way their subjectivities are illuminated in their eagerness to learn and improve their abilities, and consequently themselves. I discuss each of these points before returning to the ambivalence about reading music that was expressed in many of my interviews with members of different bands.

The first two of these points are discussed together, as they flow into each other. In the description of how the band members painstakingly learned the competition piece from Ms Theunissen, we learn that in the early years of formalised musical training they relied totally on their memories, both mental and muscular. They did not learn to read music or think it necessary. In fact, Mr September views learning to play by ear as a more thorough method than learning by reading all the notes in two hours. Learning a new piece was (should be) an arduous process that took up many hours and two sessions per week, in which they had to commit the music to memory. By contrast, learning by reading music was less strenuous or thorough: "the notes are there at all times. They don't learn, they just see it there."

In the early years, reading music was not encouraged in the competitions either; they performed hymns in four-part harmony, which were shorter pieces and often known to the members (despite Mr September's claim that the music back then was more complicated).[5] A combination of auditory and kinaesthetic learning seems to prevail nowadays as it did back then, which is probably the norm among community performance practices all over the world.[6] Also, reading music as they do these days is not necessarily all "reading": it may well be a combination of reading and remembering from frequent rehearsals. It consequently involves "a complex of visual, auditory and motor images" (Smith 1896, 490). There is a sense of pride and

achievement in really knowing a piece well so that one does not have to rely on the music. Sometimes this attitude is expressed by the older men when the band leader calls upon a piece and the younger band members search for their music in their bags or claim they cannot play it as they have left the music at home. The older men express their views quietly, addressing no one in particular, in a manner that is half chastising and half grumbling, saying, "Your music should be up here (pointing to their heads), not in your bag!" Sometimes the bandmaster voices this with more conviction. There is certainly a sense of vindication of the older method of learning by ear in these reproaches.

Due to the generational transmission of music via male family members in the earlier years, many members of Christmas bands grew up in musical homes (HS1 07/25/01, 05/16/05; CS 07/19/01; CM 01/25/08) and strong musical families are recognised in Cape Town.[7] These families themselves are the ones who started the Christmas bands, which is the reason for the prevalence of Christmas bands in Cape Town. As the competition pieces became more exacting, bands hired music teachers to teach them about the finer aspects of the music and ensemble playing as well as to read music. I discuss some of these teachers later in this chapter as well as in Chapter 5.

Many music teachers were from middle-class families (like Ms Theunissen) who spoke English. In the early years, the band members were from the working class and spoke mostly Afrikaans; they showed deference both because of their self-consciousness about speaking English and because teachers were from a higher class. Although most of the band members still speak Afrikaans as their mother tongue, and are not so well versed in English, there is much less self-consciousness now and many of the younger people, who have or are receiving a better education than the founding fathers, are fully bilingual. Thus, in my research, I found that the deference shown by the older members towards English speakers no longer applies. In my experience, the youth were hardly deferential towards me, whereas some of the older members showed extreme respect towards me as the assistant musical director and conductor.

I take the notion of infantilisation – permanent deference, far more evident amongst the older, less educated members – from Robert Shell (1994) and John Mason (2003), who trace it back to the eighteenth century. Slave owners were particularly paternalistic and patriarchal and regarded the slaves as "perpetual children" (Shell 1994, 222), referring to slave men as boys and slave women as girls (Mason 2003, 72). This patronising attitude endured throughout the apartheid era, in which white bosses, supervisors and foremen referred in similar vein to coloured and black workers. Slaves who grew up with the household children were treated like the children of the house, except that the children were expected to grow up at

some point, whereas in the eyes of their superiors the slaves never did. Slaves were in total subordination, under the master's ideological as well as physical control, and forced to "acknowledge their owners as both father and master" (Mason 2003, 72). I suggest that these attitudes were so deeply inculcated that they still reverberate in the relationship between the (middle-class) teacher and the (working-class) pupil.

In the excerpt with Mr September, their childlike manner in the learning process and acceptance of the total authority of Ms Theunissen are apparent. The full extent of this historical infantilisation became evident when I was asked to train the band during the practices for the competition piece after only being with them for three months. To illustrate this point, I insert an excerpt from my field notes entitled "*Board Competition, 28 March 2004*":

We arrive at the clubhouse at 8 am where we put the final touches to our dress – ties have to be knotted in exactly the same manner for the best dressed category of the competition. Chris Petersen, the captain, is in charge of knotting everyone's tie. With that completed and after a short meeting, we congregate outside in a semicircle in front of the clubhouse to play the prescribed piece or "solo" one more time before leaving. I conduct the piece, which is just okay. They do not remember everything I suggested in rehearsals and when we are done playing, but still holding on for the long rests at the end, one of the teenage boys forgets to hold on and talks to his mate. I was quite incensed by this action, as I had spoken about it in rehearsals, and as competition mornings are quite tense, I shout, "Shut up!" I reprimand Moeneeb and everyone else about remembering what I had told them and obeying my instructions or we could forget about winning the "solo"! After my outburst, I apologise but everyone seems to think it was all right, especially Bolla (nickname of Johann Stander), who smiles at me and shakes his head, signalling something to me that I do not understand. They suggest that we play the piece again and things go more smoothly the second time.

We board the bus and set off for the stadium. We did not travel far when I realised that I had forgotten my clarinet on the low pillar outside the clubhouse where I placed it while I conducted the band. This then becomes a source of amusement for some of the band members who tease me about my earlier shouting as the bus returns to the clubhouse. Bolla comes to sit next to me in the bus and tells me how impressed he is with me, especially today; the way that I conducted and my firmness with the members. I suggest that my shouting was perhaps uncalled for, but he assures me that it was just what they needed. This revelation is startling to me as I am quite unaware of how the members really feel about my direction. He seems quite impressed with my musical abilities, my conducting, and explanations to them, even my singing, which I have sometimes used to illustrate a musical point, always apologising for my terrible voice. No, Bolla is altogether quite impressed with me, which makes me feel somewhat uncomfortable.

I am generally soft-spoken, show restraint most times, and initially I tried to be democratic in my direction, trying to take the band members into my confidence. My attitude was that although I was skilled in Western art music, they knew my situation: here I was the student, and besides, they were mature men. Several of the middle-aged and older men would urge me to "scold" them more and "come down harder" on them. So, when I inadvertently scolded them, I received looks of admiration and secret nods from these men to show their approval. Implicated in my relationship with the musical band is my positionality as a woman; well educated, and a musical authority in contradistinction to this group of men who were less educated and amateur musicians. However, my subject position was also that of a relative "outsider" to the cultural phenomenon of Christmas bands, though becoming relatively more "inside" as I became roped into important positions in the band. This positionality needed constant negotiation and renegotiation throughout the three years in which I worked closely with the band. Mostly I downplayed the gender distinctions, pretending to be "one of the guys", but these distinctions are not easily ignored.

Lastly, a general theme that emerges in many of the interviews revolves around the practitioners' subjectivity. In the interview with Mr September quoted earlier, his subjectivity is revealed through his eagerness to learn, his attentiveness and his respectful attitude towards Ms Theunissen. The bandmaster, captain, and even the older men inculcate these attitudes during the learning process, making the space of musical transmission an important one in which the individual constitutes himself as a band member. This kind of formal behaviour is not uncommon in musical ensembles, particularly Western art music ensembles, such as wind bands and string ensembles. However, amateur musicians have also adopted these formalities, for example the English brass band movement that commonly emerged out of working-class pastimes (Finnegan 1989).

Ambivalent notions about reading music

Returning to the notion of musical literacy, the bandmaster, Wally Witbooi, showed a similar ambivalence towards reading music notation to that of Mr September:

> The advantage that we had was that we could play the saxophone first and after a couple of years we started reading, so we did one thing at a time. Now the disadvantage for these youngsters today is that they have to play and read at the same time. They are doing two things at once. Some of them can't really do it. (WW 06/25/05)

This attitude surprised me, as the bandmaster had such deep aspirations for the younger band members to improve themselves through music so that they could

one day acquire jobs as musicians in the police, army and navy bands or the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra. What to Western-trained music educators may seem like an unconventional view of learning to play music, playing first and reading later, may be more widespread in community practice. The normative notion among classically trained musicians of theory coming with practice was inculcated by the colonising grade examination systems, such as those of Trinity College of London or the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, and in South Africa's national version, the UNISA[8] graded examinations. (In this system, passing certain theory grades is a prerequisite for taking higher practical grades.) In fact, reading music is fairly uncommon in communal performance practices, especially in South Africa, and it may well be that where community musicians have made that switch to reading music, they adopted this practice of reading later in their methodology, mirroring its adoption in practice. As stated earlier, community musicians are mostly self-taught or assisted to learn to play instruments by family members or friends. Perhaps, as Finnegan (1989, 140) suggests, "it is the current extensive reliance on specialists to formally instruct and examine children that is in some respects new."

Whatever the pros and cons of reading, I certainly saw some unevenness in terms of musical literacy and ability, corresponding not only to age group but also to socioeconomic class. Some younger, school-going members, whose parents could afford music lessons, studied at local music schools and generally read music quite well. Others, whose parents did not have the economic means, learned from these young people or older band members who had gained experience playing music for a long time and subsequently learned to read. Over the years, as St Joseph's expanded beyond family members, they felt it was necessary to teach the younger people in a more systematic manner and then began establishing music schools. Peter Noble, a lifelong member of St Joseph's and owner of a music shop for many years, ran training sessions for the band members at his home in Steenberg on Friday nights, for example. These attempts at starting a music school were often not sustained, however, and led to deep frustrations for both Peter Noble and the bandmaster.

In 2008, another attempt was made in which both men, who had a frosty relationship at best, worked together in a spirit of reconciliation to revive the school. They reached many people beyond the band, attracting members of other bands as well. Members of the Royal Crusaders Christmas Band from Bellville as well as a few from Star of Calvary Christmas Band in Heathfield attended regularly. This positive response generated an initial excitement that was very constructive for the band members involved. I was invited to work with the clarinet players one evening and although there were too many students and too few teachers, the joy of having all these eager students was palpable from both men. They insisted on paying me for petrol expenses as they did with the other teachers, even though

I tried to point out that it was part of my research, anyway. There was a deep sense of pride that they were running a proper school that could remunerate the teachers in some way. Unfortunately, this was another abortive attempt that only lasted for a few months. Some of the problems encountered were an inability by the students to pay the miniscule fees that paid for the teachers and the venue consisting of a few classrooms in a school in Steenberg, as well as a lack of transport for the young children who came from many different areas in the Peninsula. Afterwards, each of the two men expressed their frustrations to me by blaming each other, thus reviving the old conflicts.

The ambivalence towards reading music surfaced in interviews with members of other bands as well. One such member was Michael Heuvel from Wynberg Progress Christmas Band:

SB: You were saying that you were about 15 when you started playing an instrument.

MH: Yes.

SB: And what instrument was that?

MH: Guitar… you were just given a guitar and you were given some notes and that was it.

SB: When you say "notes" what do you mean?

MH: Just the chords, so chords were like G, C, F; the most important which people at that particular time used… and you had to teach yourself and the funny thing about it, when you used to play you had to memorise the hymn and when you get to a house you will run to the front and make sure you stand where [someone] that plays and that knows what he's playing and just to catch on… otherwise you lose it because sometimes you then play the wrong key… but that was it. To me that was very interesting and very nice compared to the people now and what we're doing at the particular moment, what we want to do and what we are trying to do.

I returned to this point later in the interview, asking him to explain it:

MH: What I mean there is, today we give the children the opportunity to read, to be able to read music. Before, in my time they used to give you a guitar or give you a saxophone, you need to play. There wasn't time for them still to teach you and when it comes to your… only when it comes to the "solo" part then they used to tell you that is the notes. Now we used to play out of G, C, D, which some people used to, will say *kruis* (sharp), so it's D and F. I didn't know about B-flat, E-flat, minor keys but today we get the

opportunity because if you played that time the "solos" out of the Alexander Hymn Books so there was simple keys to read, today you get A-flat, you start off a "solo" in A-flat. If you couldn't play the B-flat at that particular time they used to tune the guitar and they used to put a bridge on in order for you to play out of G ... this is what I can remember. These *ouens* (guys) I think were brilliant because, now the other day I went and the secretary of the… Mr Christy Amsterdam, he was saying they tuned their guitars at that particular time, I can remember they used to tune the guitar. Now how do we do that? There was a certain way you tune the guitar so that you played out of G.

SB: Ok, so it didn't matter what keys you played in, it was always the simple keys on the guitar but not on the other instruments, you played in the different keys…

MH: Yes, you played in the different keys, so they used to concentrate more on those. But before, I mean where the "solos" were concerned, those years when the violins and the banjos, I think we want to… yes they used to play out of the simple keys and to make it easy. I mean Dan Ulster, his wife was at that particular time the adjudicator.

SB: Initially people played hymns for the competitions, not classical pieces, so when did the classical pieces come into play?

MH: … when we came to the year when the Athlone Union, when Wynberg Progress joined with the Athlone Union[9] [we] played from what was known then as *bladmusiek* (sheet music) and yes, when it was that time, they had to start learning this thing from October in order for them to not use music in front of them.

SB: And without mistakes.

MH: Without mistakes! (MH 06/05/07)

Evident in this excerpt is an admiration for the older men who creatively adapted the guitar through tuning the bass notes up or down and using the *capo d'astra* to establish the different keys in which the pieces were played. From this interview, it seems that these innovative methods have been lost along the road to musical literacy.[10] In fact, not many youngsters want to play instruments such as the guitar and banjo any longer, as they are not regarded as "cool" or trendy instruments. The bandmaster bemoaned this attitude with me and I picked it up from some of the young horn players in casual conversation. The banjo is a salient marker for Western Cape musical practices and the loss of its timbre and rhythmic drive changes the subtle nuances in the music substantially.

The large swing towards wind instruments is evident in the *klopse* as well, where in the mid-2000s they often played very badly, out of tune and rhythmically uninterestingly. This could have been because there was not much training in the *klopse*, since historically the members of the Christmas bands provided the brass accompaniment to the road marches of the *klopse* and Malay choirs. My research shows that there was always training of some sort in the Christmas bands (as well as rehearsals), particularly for the competitions. The *klopse* leaders have now realised that it is not realistic to hand out wind instruments to youngsters without any training and there have been attempts at rectifying the situation. The reason for the *klopse* introducing wind instruments is twofold: the leaders feel that it is a way of socially uplifting deprived communities – young people are given something constructive to concentrate on and thereby kept off the streets;[11] and they can have larger bands, removing the need to pay the ever-increasing fees of the musicians from the Christmas bands.

This switch towards wind has been more gradual in the Christmas bands, where there has always been a string section, though now much reduced. The change in the *klopse* sparked the establishment of an association called the Western Cape Street Bands Association, in 2008. This organisation is trying to revive the original instrumentation of the *klopse* parades, using the banjo, *ghoema* drum and *tamboor* (little frame drum), and sending youngsters for training on wind instruments. This revival is not unique to the Western Cape; folk revival movements parallel it elsewhere in the world. These are often social movements spearheaded by the middle class in opposition to an encroaching contemporary cultural mainstream, in which they seek to restore a musical system that they believe is disappearing (Livingston 1999). What is different about the revival in Cape Town is that the leaders in these practices are themselves spearheading the revival of these instruments.

Michael Heuvel recognises that although there is something lost, there is also pride in something gained: "Today we can show off with the talent because now we need to get ourselves ready because we use sheet music" (MH 06/05/07). This may also suggest that they consequently start to learn the pieces much earlier, starting already in October in order to meet all the demands of the new kind of music they perform.

A more ambivalent response came from Billy Baatjes of Young Coronations Christmas Band:

BB: Maybe that is also what counts against us when it comes to membership. I won't say you must be able to read. All of our guys read. Everyone reads and everyone knows what he's doing, whatever. So, if you don't read we can teach you. But the majority, especially the "seniors," they are not really interested.

Currently, there are Christmas bands where they have the problems where the older guys still play piano notes, whatever, and he reads A, B, C and D. And the younger guys – we are living in different times. The guys are educated. The youngsters are educated.

SB: They read music?

BB: They read music. They do recordings, CDs. And when you buy a book, what you call it, a study book whatever [tutor], it comes with a video sometimes or it comes with a CD, whatever. It's everything made so easy but that time it was different. I'm also led to believe that guy, *Boeta*[12] Boy that plays the trumpet, he left St Joseph's because one of the *laaities* (youngsters) said to him he read *apie taal*. They refer to that as *apie taal*. The alphabet a, b, c, and d they say is *aaptaal*. Which I think is unfair. I've sat in our union meetings where that also was read [out]. I said that is so unfair. People didn't know different at that time. They didn't know better at that time you understand, they didn't. These kids, Jonathan said to me that's why that guy left. If any one of my youngsters would refer to anybody as [reading] *apie taal*, I'll reprimand them because times have changed and these guys don't know better. Now this Mr Denis-Constant Martin, he wrote a book on the *Kaapse klopse* (Cape minstrels) whatever. In that book he states quite clearly, the ear for music was fantastic the way these people can catch on. Me personally, the way a guy can fit in with his alto part… he knows, I'm playing the tenor and he would play the tenor notes. And the one who plays… he would play alto notes where the others would sit down and orchestrate.

SB: You don't get that kind of response from people who read music?

BB: That is my downfall, because I was reading. I was relying on reading. (BB 01/08/08)

Aside from the theme of older men who had little musical literacy having resources that the present musically literate youth do not have (again echoing the Ong 1988 quote above), the excerpt also indicates a middle-class conceit about reading staff notation that might be alienating to the older men. Rochelle Klassen[13] explained to me that what Mr Baatjes referred to as "piano notes" was reading everything in the key of C major. This was a method taught through some churches where the pianist or organist in charge did not understand about transposing instruments. The wind players would find the note on their instruments that sounded similar to the note on the piano and call it by that name. Also noteworthy in this interview is the reference to Denis Martin, the French sociologist author of *Coon Carnival* (1999). Mr Baatjes

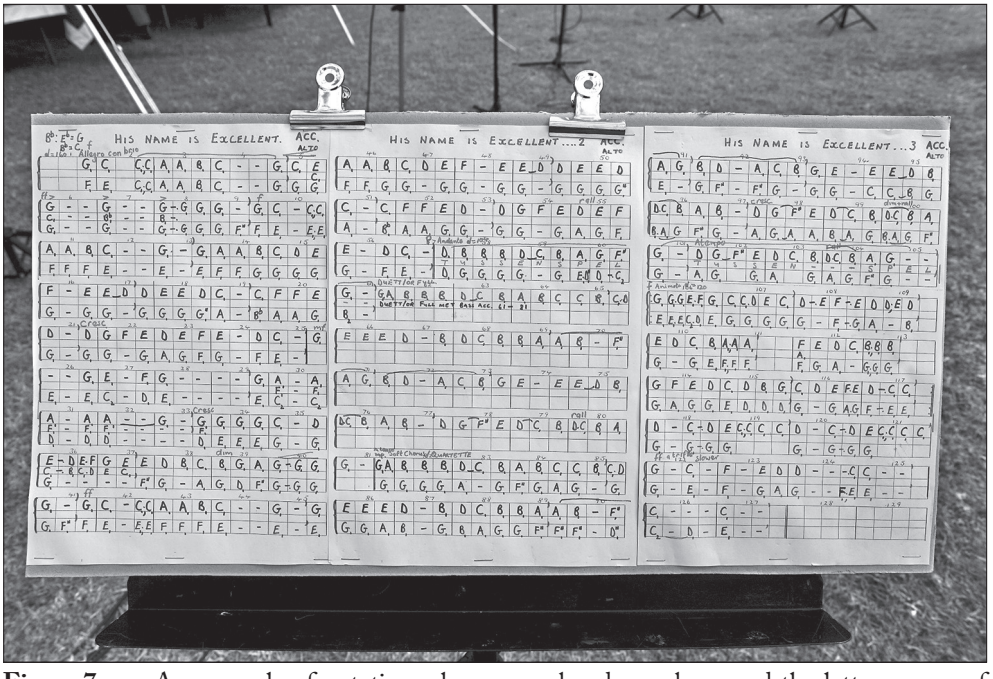


Figure 7 An example of notation where some band members read the letter names of notes.

had a copy of this book at his home and other books on Cape history and culture, such as Rasmussen's *Jazz People of Cape Town* (2003), as well as orchestrations for dance band, displaying his deep interest in music and culture (and perhaps also his importance as an informant). He was leader of a well-known dance band, The Silhouettes, which he spoke about very fondly, but with his advancing years and his wife's frailness, he could no longer spend hours away from home with both the Christmas and dance bands.

The move away from playing music without notation to being "professional" and reading staff notation was pioneered in St Joseph's by Mr September, despite his initial aversion to reading. "It was only when I bought myself a saxophone and I was playing with people I discovered that no, man, this is a different kind of key that these people are playing" (HS2 05/16/05). He passed on the values of discipline and respectability, exemplified through musical literacy, to the entire band. I suspected that the competitions linked reading music to the notion of professionalism. Professionalism in this instance does not revolve around payment for musical skills and services rendered, what Turino (2000 52) refers to as "income-generating activity", but appearing in public with the deportment and expertise of a professional musician. The bandmaster of St Joseph's confirmed this when he suggested that these "new ideas" of reading music at the competitions were implemented in the 1980s

after the establishment of the Western Province Christmas Bands Board in 1976. Before that, reading the musical score was not allowed at the competitions: band members memorised the pieces and "played by heart." When they first read sheet music for the competitions, the outcome of that method of learning was initially treated in the same manner as the former method of learning by ear: they committed the music to memory and played without music at the competitions. These days the bands display their music on stands or the "juniors" hold it for them, whether or not they have memorised it.

Figure 8 Juniors holding the music sheets for the senior performers at a performance during a Christmas Eve road march.

Another pioneer in terms of "professionalising" the Christmas bands through musical literacy was Mr Charles Sprinkle,[14] a prominent leader of the Young Guiding Stars Sacred String Band and the Athlone and Districts Christmas Bands Union. He believed that it was through reading music that Christmas band members gained (self)-respect:

> Don't say yes to everything, ask questions! And if it's a white man, you challenge him, don't accept it. I always tell the youngsters, you are better than that white

> man, even though you don't have an instrument. But the important thing is if he takes out his music stand, you also take out your music stand. If he takes out a piece that has to be played, you play that piece with him to show him that you can also read music. And this is the way people start to respect you as a community, as Christmas bands. (CS 07/19/01)

Staff notation here is clearly related to notions of social upliftment and social status as well as ideas about standardisation and professionalism.[15] Mr Sprinkle was responsible for actively spreading these ideas through workshops in which he garnered the services of professional brass players and teachers (incidentally, mostly white men who taught at the University of Cape Town and played in the Symphony Orchestra) and through whose efforts many younger players learned to read staff notation fluently. These workshops were held in the mid- to late- 1990s, often in the school holidays when students in working-class communities, particularly, might be tempted to get involved in untoward activities. It may be after their association with these important men who read music from music stands that Christmas band members' attitudes about reading scores at the competitions finally changed.

Mr Sprinkle's words also illuminate his perception of self and how reading music can be used to constitute a respectable self, musically on par with the "white man", if not economically ("even though you don't have an instrument"). It also illustrates grappling with another kind of internalisation: the inferiority of the coloured man[16] and the perception that the "white man" is better. This inferiority complex was fuelled by a notion of white racial superiority that existed throughout the nineteenth century and "on which the rationalisation of dominant class position was legitimised and based" (Bickford-Smith 1989, 49). The resultant sense of inferiority induced an ardent desire to assimilate and to attain a similar social status to that of the white man, the underlying belief being that achieving the social status of the white man would result in gaining the franchise. But this was to remain elusive for most of the twentieth century. According to Bickford-Smith (1989, 62), in the early-twentieth century whiteness was firmly linked to superiority and respectability. People of colour in Cape Town "were being urged to aspire to dominant class values to gain social respectability but, if socially successful, suffered social exclusion." It is within this "special tradition of multiracialism" at the Cape (Bickford-Smith 1989, 61) that ethnic mobilisation emerged in the form of the APO (discussed in Chapter 1) and still reverberates in the current racialised politics in the Western Cape.

Ownership of instruments

The bands own several instruments and those who cannot afford to buy instruments can borrow these for as long as they remain active members. Like most of the

established St Joseph's rules, to which they profess to adhere strictly, this one is sometimes dishonoured. The case of one of the trumpeters is instructive here. Nigel Smith[17] was quite a good trumpeter and member of the band for many years. He also played in the Pollsmoor Prison Band.[18] During the year I arrived (2004), he quitted St Joseph's under a cloud that never dissipated. His father and father-in-law (bandmaster) were both members of the band and never saw eye-to-eye. In contrast, Nigel and the bandmaster got on very well due to their musical expertise, I suspect; they had a mutual respect and admiration for each other. Nigel formally resigned when younger teenage trumpet players challenged his guaranteed individual solo spot at competitions. They felt that it was unfair for him to waltz in to play at the competitions not having participated in the rehearsals, while they had regularly attended all the band's activities. One of the younger trumpeters registered his protest by "sitting out" at the competitions. In the heated meeting that followed, the young trumpeters were supported on this issue by some of the older men, and it was around instruments that the dynamics played out.

Mr Esau, the chairperson at the time, reasoned that it was important to rope in the youngsters as this kept them attached to the band. Since they were very faithful throughout the season, he argued that those who were capable should be given the responsibility of representing the band at competitions. The bandleader responded that they were simply not yet good enough to play the individual solo trumpet parts at the competition; they had a long way to go – he often threatened that if members did not attend rehearsals regularly, they were not guaranteed to perform in the competition. Nigel must have thought that he was beyond having to show this kind of discipline – he was so experienced that the band needed him more than he needed it. He responded that he had had to bide his time as a youngster before he could play in the competitions, it was good for the youngsters to learn and be disciplined in that way, and soon he was going to perform overseas. I suspect this last comment was mainly to further illustrate his importance as a musician and how he had benefited from learning with the Christmas band.

In the end, he succumbed to pressure, and consequently resigned from the band. However, he did not return the trumpet, which was the band's instrument, and the same young trumpeters, who were also the trustees charged with taking care of the instruments, raised this fact often. At several general meetings during the next two years (at least) this point was returned to until the band "father", Mr September, decided that he would "sort it out". Already in his 80s, he did not want to drive such a long distance alone at night (about 20km) and suggested that another member of the executive body take him to Nigel's house one evening.

Several years later, this task still needed to be undertaken. The reason for the instrument becoming such a big issue is twofold, I believe. Firstly, since Nigel had

had the instrument for such a long time, they probably felt uncomfortable taking it away from him, and I was later told that there was even some dispute around the ownership of the instrument. Secondly, they were still hoping that Nigel would return to the band, where he belonged (in perpetuity, as we have already seen). This is reminiscent of Mr September's wise words quoted earlier, "They all return some day: they need the band more than the band needs them!"

The roles of the bandmaster and captain

As stated in Chapter 3, these two positions are most important for the band's performance activities: both bandmaster and captain are integrally involved in the organisation and preparations for the competitions. Their roles are clearly delineated: while the bandmaster is responsible for the overall musical direction, the captain's primary duties include setting rehearsal times and taking responsibility for discipline in the rehearsals and on the road marches. The bandmaster is in total charge of the rehearsals as an orchestral conductor would be – including the discipline of band members during rehearsals – and the captain often endorses the disciplinary measures of the bandmaster.

The captain's role is more evident at the beginning and end of a rehearsal. He may speak sternly to the band at the beginning, thereby setting the tone for the bandmaster and an atmosphere for a productive session. A typical address would evolve along the following lines: *"Vanaand is ons hier om te oefen en ons moet almal onse volle aandag gee. Geen speletjies vanaand; die tyd is kort en elke man moet sy rol speel."* ("Tonight we are here to practise and we have to give our full attention [to the bandmaster and conductor.] No playing around tonight; the time is short and we need everyone to play his part.") He may end the practice in the same way, reminding the members of their task at the upcoming competitions. Other disciplinary measures may include longer or more frequent practice sessions and a general dressing down when the band does not play well and members have clearly not practised between rehearsals or are tardy in coming to rehearsals.

There is also considerable fluidity amongst these executive positions, however, and as the bands grow and their needs expand, they may bulk up their portfolios with deputy positions. When I joined St Joseph's in November 2003, they had a bandmaster and a captain. A year after my involvement as conductor of the band at the previous competitions, I was elected in the capacity of assistant bandmaster, a position I held for three years. In 2006, they elected an assistant captain, Chris Petersen, who had been the captain for many years but did not have the personality for enforcing discipline. As explained to me by the bandmaster:

> I sort of nurtured [him], you know. [He] still doesn't have that oomph to be a captain. He can't stamp his authority down on people. He is a soft-hearted guy. A lovely guy, I love him. He is a nice guy. That is why I gave way [as captain]. I was glad for that because it relieved me of all that responsibility. (WW 06/26/05)

Chris Petersen was more interested in the music being performed, taking lessons in theory and trombone, and beginning to arrange music for the band. Consequently, he later became an obvious candidate for assistant bandmaster, which seemed a more appropriate position that relieved him of the responsibility of maintaining discipline and order on the road marches.[19]

In the past, the captain oversaw all the performance activities, but with such prolific growth in the last two decades, the role of bandmaster became necessary. Some of the older men who had been captains for many years still find this idea somewhat ludicrous, as they perceive the title of "bandmaster" too elevated for what they do. Mr Paul Cipio, for example, captain of Star of Calvary Christmas Band for many years, seemed very embarrassed when I asked him about his position as bandmaster, and alluded to the fact that he was not a trained musician – he just helped where he could; he would not compare himself to a real conductor of a band or orchestra, and so on. The term bandmaster was a new one, which he was not comfortable with, as he had performed the same duties while he was captain of the band (PC 08/20/08). Assistant positions maybe also ensure regularity of attendance: the new captain of St Joseph's certainly attended band events more regularly than before. The Perseverance Christmas Band, with an extremely large membership, has also incorporated more positions onto the executive to serve the band more effectively.

Learning the "solo" in St Joseph's

By January 2005 I had been working with St Joseph's for just over a year when I witnessed quite a revealing scene. At our first rehearsal of the new union competition piece, which we started to learn from scratch that evening, I realised the enormity of the challenge these musicians faced when learning light classical pieces for competition. The arrangement of the new "solo" piece, "The Lost Chord" by Arthur Sullivan, required several of the "background" performers to play individual parts. These consisted of the clarinet and soprano saxophone doubling on the lead voice, and alto and tenor saxophones playing the supporting harmony, while another soprano and alto and tenor saxophones played smaller individual parts. The person chosen to play the smaller individual soprano saxophone part was quite a confident, though brusque, performer. He could pick up melodies easily when the band played in the bus and I was often quite amazed at his ability to play a melody fluently within seconds as I struggled to get the melody on the clarinet.[20] These, I soon learned, were

well-known hymns or popular tunes that everyone knew, which he may or may not have played before.

At the practice that evening, the bandmaster worked with the "background" musicians in a bedroom of the clubhouse, while the captain (Chris Petersen) took the rest of the band in the lounge. In this piece, the "background" musicians' parts were musically more challenging, hence the bandmaster initially worked with them separately. The score that the bandmaster received was an arrangement for four voices with piano accompaniment. The four voices played a chorale-like harmonised melody while the piano part was slightly more embellished. This score was arranged appropriately for the band's instrumental format as a double quartet and together these two sections produced a dense harmony. Those of us who played the "background", in this instance the embellished piano part, set off rather shakily but we got a sense of the music after several attempts. The individual soprano saxophone player did not attempt to play his part and the bandmaster gestured to him occasionally saying that he would attend to him soon. The saxophonist replied that he was fine and did not mind waiting.[21] As a classically trained musician, I preferred to learn a new piece in the quiet of my own space. I needed a few attempts on the clarinet before I felt confident about my performance. The rest of the musicians seemed to need more time and I assisted my partner, doubling on the soprano saxophone as he usually played the alto saxophone and was not a fluent reader. Some of the band members remarked on my fluency in reading staff notation and my ability to learn music easily, and I sensed a slight discomfort as the differences in our educational levels became evident.

Once we had figured out the music, the bandmaster turned to the other soprano saxophonist and took him through the piece note-by-note, writing out the names of the notes above the staff and singing the melody and rhythm to him while he attempted to play it. This was a tedious task that required several attempts; the patience of the bandmaster was admirable. It was at this point that I was struck by the realisation of what it meant to these musicians to perform at the annual competitions. I truly marvelled at my fellow band members' patience and their persistence in this annual undertaking, which required that they learned several difficult classical pieces, in which they pitted themselves against others for the coveted "solo" trophy. That year they won the first prize in the "solo" category at the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union competition, making their efforts well worth it.

Conflicting ideas: Bandmaster's aspirations versus community's expectations

As the bandmaster of St Joseph's, Wally Witbooi had aspirations for the band that seemed impossible to achieve. Some of these were producing a slick CD, which could generate income for the band, or having younger members end up performing in the police, army or navy bands (which some already did), or even in the city orchestra. He was very ambitious for the band and experienced high levels of frustration and disappointment, which he vocalised often. These aspirations led to some tension between the direction of the band and its community support, as manifested in a story relayed to me by one of the older band members.[22] Mr Mouton spoke of an elderly woman who had reacted to the band playing a classical piece excellently at a community function by saying, "St Joseph's, *julle het 'n mooi stukkie gemors gespeel vanaand!*" ("St Joseph's, you played a nice piece of rubbish tonight!"). After this, Mr Mouton had suggested that the band rather play music in which the audience felt included, also more religiously inspiring and uplifting music, as that was what the community expected. People even perceived the band's role as bringing back old favourite hymns that had been superseded by more modern ones. Playing orchestrated music may be beautiful to band members but the supporters did not understand it. This story illustrates the dichotomy between the aspirations of the band and bandmaster, and the expectations of the community. It was also expressed in an interview with Michael Heuvel:

> One of those things I'm afraid of [is] that if we go into that type of music, then our spectators [may not] understand the piece which we are playing. I think we are playing for our spectators because that is what they understand, people keep on saying we need to get music when it's for instruments. But if we get music for instruments, will our spectators understand it? (MH 06/05/07)

Inherent in this dilemma is the understanding that the audience is a crucial element of the band's existence and success – because it plays to the community, not (usually) to a wider public. Keeping the balance between pleasing the community and appealing to the aspirations of the band members as musicians is a rather delicate issue. Nor is the issue confined to repertoire. Included in the community's perception is the sound associated with the bands. The characteristics come from a certain sonority created through wide variance of intonation, because the brass instruments are of the cheaper variety, and some are quite old and worn, as well as from the method of musical transmission, which was orally based and allowed for certain idiosyncrasies to be passed on through the generations. These include a warm tone created through excessive vibrato on the saxophones, scoops and glides resulting in a relaxed manner

of pitching, and rhythmic inflection: such a sound indeed characterised the local musical practices in the Western Cape generally.[23] This "musical sound of community" (as described in Chapter 2) is perhaps an instance of the impact of the oral/aural on the dynamics of the written form (Khamis 2005, 204). All of the above aspects combined make tuning the band virtually impossible. Rochelle Klassen, a music graduate who assists one of the bands, explains this resultant sound as imitating a vocal sound on the saxophones. Sean Kierman, a wind band personality who has lectured at several universities, been involved as an adjudicator, and run workshops for the bands, described the sound in the following manner:

> Traditionally it's been very scoopy, the tenor sax scoops up to notes all the time. Very hard articulation, the kind of honky articulation that bad saxophonists get or beginners do and a wild vibrato, so wild it's impossible to tune anything. So the characteristic was then to play in an individualistic style and basically do your own thing. There are still some of the golden oldies out there who do that, but they've become increasingly aware that by doing it they've contributed to not a very musical effect. (SK 5/12/07)

This community sound is less prevalent at the competitions due to the work of adjudicators – like Kierman – who give "solo" reports to each individual band as well as their summarising commentaries at the competitions. These summary commentaries are sometimes done only with the bandmasters and/or captains or they may be quite public, after the competitions and just before the handing out of the trophies, for all the competitors and spectators to hear. Although the spectators thus also learn about preferred performance practices in Western art music (which I discuss more fully in Chapter 5), the more traditional "scoopy", "hard", "honky" sound of the Christmas bands is still favoured during the road marches and other community events. It is interesting how bands are able to produce this "community sound" for the latter and the more "polished" sound for the competitions. Rochelle Klassen confirms this:

RK: Well, we're moving away from it [typical Christmas band sound], definitely. I think there's a wind band sound coming in, not military band, but a wind band sound. In our band we don't have a lot of brass.

SB: So you think for competitions we're moving away from the Christmas band sound?

RK: Look, when they're walking in the streets they can change from a classically trained player like this [snaps finger] to that. I found a lot of people, when it's competition time, then they're reserved.

SB: So you pick this up in their stance, the way they stand and present themselves?

RK: Definitely, because when I train them for competitions, they're different when they play for competitions. Even the way I let them stand, in the position I let them stand, is different. When we're in the street or walking, we stand in rows of three, in formation.

SB: But when they play in front of people's houses they congregate?

RK: They still stand in formation; they are more relaxed and congregate with the guitars and cello forming an enclosure around them. But their mannerisms – there is a change. And if we're playing in the streets there is a happier sound. (RK 07/28/08)

It is this "happier" sound that is so characteristic (and loved) in the Western Cape. Partly, the banjos and guitars drive it: their rhythm is strident and relentless. The banjo, in particular, can be heard above all other instruments, especially when there are two or three banjos strumming together. Another reason this sound is less audible at the competitions is that the competition pieces these days are more than likely light classical favourites that are devoid of the emblematic rhythmic drive. In the bandmasters' attempts at representing these light classical standards with the correct "tone", they have done away with the percussively played string instruments. Rochelle Klassen again:

RK: For the last three years, I have not spotted one guitar in the competition. Not in the actual "solo" piece. In my first four years I was there, we always used guitars in the "solo".

SB: Don't you use guitars anymore either?

RK: No, not now.

Visiting other bands

Since I found it difficult to work with another band for an extended period because of my perceived allegiance to St Joseph's, I visited a couple of bands during their preparations for the 2008 competitions and two afterwards to observe their modus operandi. In the sections below, I give brief sketches of four of them, tracing their similarities to and differences from St Joseph's. Generally, they had a large presence of young people, both male and female, they read music from music stands, and they were coached and conducted by the band director. Only wind instruments were present, with the saxophones dominating, except in the Perseverance Christmas Band, where brass instruments dominated. I was usually given a special welcome, introduced, and sometimes asked to inform the members about my interest in the band.

Star of Peace Christmas Band, Bishop Lavis

One of the first bands I visited, affiliated with the board as well as with the Elsies River Christmas Bands Union, was Star of Peace Christmas Band in Bishop Lavis. I had a very successful interview with the "father" of the band, Cedric Malado, who invited me to the band practice that same evening, 25 January 2008. They were performing a Bach "Arioso" for their union competition. It was very encouraging to see so many young musicians and young female performers, in particular. This was a real family band and Mr Malado very proudly introduced me to his family members: sons, grandchildren, daughter-in-law, nieces and nephews.

The director, one of the sons of Cedric Malado, worked through the piece by making them play it a few times. His comments were limited to playing the correct notes and adhering to dynamic markings. The musicians were quite passive, listening to the comments and trying to implement the corrections made by the bandmaster, as they do at St Joseph's. During the break that evening, the younger Malado and I talked about the competitions and he expressed considerable resentment around competition results concerning the "solo", in particular.[24] I take up this topic again in Chapter 5, but mention here only that he and I argued over this point in front of the band members, who were obviously sympathetic to their director's views. As he was more passionate about his views and voiced them strongly, I felt as if some of the members seriously doubted my opinion. Yet it was clear to me that he did not have much musical training, which limited his understanding and interpretation of the adjudicators' decisions.

I left the rehearsal feeling rather deflated for two reasons. Firstly, my intention was not to stir up emotions around competition adjudication, but I had felt that I needed to defend the integrity of adjudicators – some of whom were my colleagues at the university. And secondly, the performance of the Bach work was extremely unmusical, with a complete lack of understanding of Baroque performance practice. This latter reason accounted more for my despondence. I felt hamstrung that as an observer/researcher and member of another band, I could not assist the group. Assisting the bands musically was not the reason I was there; besides, I was determined not to fall into that habit, even when approached by the members. Nevertheless, I felt that perhaps if I did work with this group and enabled them to understand the difference between playing notes correctly and interpreting Bach correctly, they might have a more informed understanding of the adjudicators' decisions.

Royal Crusaders Christmas Band, Bellville

In February 2008, I visited the Royal Crusaders Christmas Band of the Peninsula and District Christmas Bands Union. In their pre-practice meeting they were discussing

the contentious board competition piece, "The Holy City," which had been given to them prearranged. Twenty-seven band members were present: nine females and 18 males. Most of the members were young teens to mid-20s, with a core of senior men who had been there for many years. What was refreshing and surprising was the role that the younger people played. The bandmaster was a school-going youngster who was studying music as a school subject and was clearly respected for his expertise in fluent reading, arranging skills, and in-depth understanding of music. As they had about a month to the next competition, the opinions they voiced were that they would not be intimidated by the complexities of the new piece. When they discussed the number of times they would practise in the week, the older men suggested that they do as they had done in the past by practising every night. The school pupils objected that they had school responsibilities and examinations coming up; yet others objected that some of them came a distance and that petrol had become increasingly expensive.

They also discussed the instrumentation of the piece, many of them voicing strong opinions, confidently assuming that their opinions mattered and would be taken seriously. I found this refreshing, as I was used to the bandmaster and captain of St Joseph's being mostly responsible for these decisions. St Joseph's band members sometimes voiced objections if the decisions appeared too taxing on their time. The decisions directly related to music were almost non-negotiable, whereas with the Royals Crusaders there was a sense that the musicians' opinions were valued. I learned later in an interview with their vice-chairperson (see Chapter 6) that these young people had studied music at the Perseverance Christmas Band's "music school", where they had learned to read music quite fluently and they often learned to play more than one instrument. I got the distinct sense that it was due to their knowledge of music that these young people were so confident in their opinions, unlike in other bands where there was less knowledge and competence and the bandmaster assumed a more powerful role. This meeting gave me a very good sense of the relationships among the band members.

At a rehearsal of their competition piece much later, in March 2013, I was able to observe the bandmaster, Levi Alexander, who was now in his final year of the Bachelor of Music Degree at the University of Cape Town. This was also an opportunity to observe the spread of instruments and gender amongst the band members. There were 21 musicians at the rehearsal that night: nine women and 12 men. The spread of the women on instruments was as follows: four on soprano saxophone, three on alto saxophone, one on clarinet and one on trumpet. The spread of instruments among the men was as follows: one on soprano saxophone, two on alto saxophones, two on baritone saxophone, three on trumpets, one on trombone, two on tuba and one on sousaphone. This array of instruments follows the hetero-normal gendering of

instruments, with mostly women on woodwinds and smaller brass and mostly men on brass and larger wind instruments. Of course, sometimes these are very necessary practical decisions, since some of the larger instruments are quite heavy and in a parading practice it is quite a consideration for women, who are not endowed with the physical capabilities of men. Nevertheless, I was informed that some of the women did play the baritone saxophone as well. Most musicians seemed quite young, in their teens and 20s, and I learned that there were probably only four or five older male musicians in the band.

The bandmaster's style was fairly autocratic; he was the ultimate authority and musical director, as is often expected by the musicians. He had clearly absorbed much of the style and aesthetics of Western art music and the repertoire of delivery of the musical director in terms of his methods of conducting and presentation of the problematic parts that still needed work.

Palm Crusaders Christmas Band, Ravensmead

On 13 March 2008, I observed a practice session of the Palm Crusaders Christmas Band of the Peninsula and District Christmas Bands Union. They were known to be a competitive band with a moderate instrumental line-up and were usually strong contenders in the board competitions. The band was established in 1973 and had 26 "seniors" and 12 "juniors" with a number of "tiny tots". When I arrived at the practice, 18 members were standing in a semicircle in the double garage of one of the members. There was a strong contingent of girls and young women, and a few young children sat in their midst observing the older people. The 22 instrumentalists (four more joining later) were divided as follows: four trumpets, one E flat and one B flat horn, two trombones, one bass tuba, one clarinet, two soprano saxophones, six alto saxophones, two tenor saxophones and two baritone saxophones. They practised Oscar Petersen's "Hymn to Freedom" and "The Holy City", the competition piece. Early in the evening the assistant bandmaster, who was taking the practice as the bandmaster was playing the lead trumpet, warned them about playing excessive vibrato.

The bandmaster, who was one of the late arrivals, immediately set about tuning the band. He also occasionally commented on their progress. They played through the pieces a few times with the assistant band director conducting them and commenting on their playing. Once again, correct notes and dynamics were emphasised, although the director was more aware of phrasing and breathing. They knew the Petersen work better than "The Holy City", but were beginning to sort out the intricacies of the "solo".

Perseverance Christmas Band, Elsies River

Perseverance is one of the more successful Christmas bands in terms of membership and competitiveness. They have 239 members on their membership list and have an impressive band with a range of wind instruments, including more unusual instruments such as sousaphones. They are a formidable contender and have won the "solo" category in the "A" competition of the board several times as well as the overall "best band" category. Initially, I wanted to study them as an alternative band, but then a student from the University of Stellenbosch chose to study them for her master's research. She came to consult me on whether she could pursue this topic for her research. I agreed with her that I would not get too involved with the band and that she could use them as her case study. I attended a practice after the competitions, on 7 August 2008. I was especially interested in the very successful "music school" they had operated for several years.

I gained more insight into the music school in telephonic interviews on 4 August 2008 and 8 June 2010 with Keith Moore, the person who had started the school in the late 1980s. He explained that he had been the captain of the band for several years, but decided to "stand aside for the sake of the development of the youngsters in the band." He also played a significant role on the union and board executives. He started teaching a few older men when he realised that many men his age were leaving the band and the band was not attracting the youth either. Asking himself, "What keeps me in the band?" he realised the answer was "the music." At the time, there were only 12 musicians in the band, so he started a school for the band members only. This created a "desire to learn music" and a "demand for tuition" that went beyond the band. Church groups and other bands in the area also sent their young members to learn music. Two assistants helped in the organisation of the school and taught theory for the first three months before the students played an instrument. Various older band members assisted with teaching the instruments once the students had learned some theory. They eventually had 25 children playing various instruments at different levels, which made group teaching quite challenging. He had realised that they had neglected the Perseverance Band for the last five years as the school had taken so much time, and so decided to give it a rest in 2008. He claimed that their objective of "lifting the standard of the band" had not really materialised, although my research leads me to believe that many youngsters in the area would not be in Christmas bands today had it not been for the music school (IV 02/25/08). Mr Moore claimed that 20 per cent of their current membership came from the school. In the later interview, he maintained that "the school had a major impact attracting youngsters and older guys" and that after Perseverance many other bands had taken this route of establishing music schools for their members.

Perseverance practised at the Eurecon Primary School in Elsies River, a large suburb comprising different sections of working-class and middle-class neighbourhoods. I arrived at the school at around 20:15 and heard the band tuning up. As I entered the double classroom after the customary prayer, a few young males shouted a rousing, "*hallo juffrou!*" ("hello miss!") A little surprised at the enthusiastic greeting, I quickly realised that another person was entering behind me. This was Suretha Theron, the master's student at Stellenbosch University who was studying the band. She told me that she had joined the band after being very impressed with their performance as an adjudicator at the Elsies River and District Christmas Bands Union competition one year, which sparked her interest in this cultural phenomenon. She was in charge of the musical direction of the band at the rehearsal that evening and had a lovely warm relationship with the band members.

They started off well, more or less in tune, with a strong confident tone. Suretha refined their rhythmic inaccuracies by making the whole band clap the tricky rhythms together. I learned later that of the two pieces they played that evening, they had learned the first one just the previous week and the second one that evening. Clearly, their reading skills were excellent; the music school had evidently paid off. Keith Moore had told me before that most of the youngsters had come through the Perseverance music school and that it had definitely improved the reading skills within the band. The band members were quite young and surprisingly disciplined. Even when Suretha was working with one section only, they were quiet and spoke softly to each other, which was surprising for so many young people together.[25] Refining the intonation and interpretation were the main challenges that evening – they obviously enjoyed playing together and played quite loudly, not listening much to each other. There was hardly any vibrato playing: they had more of a wind band sound and less of the typical Christmas band aesthetics were prevalent. Of the 35 mostly young instrumentalists, ten were women and there were five older men. The spread of wind instruments included 12 trumpets (four women), three trombones, one French horn, one tuba, four clarinets (three women), three soprano saxophones (two women), two alto saxophones, three tenor saxophones (one woman) and one baritone saxophone.

The bands trained in ways very similar to St Joseph's: they worked mainly on notation and dynamics. These two elements (especially playing the correct notes) were perceived as important aspects of performance for the bands. Of the bands I visited, only Perseverance concentrated on other aspects, such as working on playing tricky rhythms precisely, presumably because their bandleader was a formally trained musician and wind-band specialist. Another unusual aspect of their training, which emerged in my conversations with Keith Moore, was teaching to read notation before playing the instrument. This is contrary to how community musicians generally learn,

as I discussed earlier in the chapter. Finally, a growing awareness of the dangers of too much vibrato was changing the typical aesthetics of the Christmas bands and creating more of a wind band sound. This can be attributed to at least two factors: the increasing involvement of trained musicians in the bands as bandleaders, captains and general members, and the involvement of adjudicators and other highly skilled musicians in workshops. I discuss these in more detail below.

Biographical sketches of musical directors of other bands

For an even broader view, I also interviewed the musical directors of other bands. In this chapter, I discuss two who had formal university training and were performers in the bands. I discuss (often older) female directors in Chapter 6. It was becoming clear to me that quite a few of the current (younger) musical directors were musicians who had had formal musical training and were members of the musical bands. This seemed to be a growing trend and quite different from the past, where formally trained musicians came to assist the bands during competition times and possibly for other important musical occasions. Bands were either attracting members who were already musicians, to benefit from their skills, or were cultivating musicians and encouraging them to continue the pursuit of their musical studies.

Rochelle Klassen, Star of Calvary Christmas Band, Heathfield[26]

When I interviewed Rochelle Klassen in 2008, she was a young university graduate who had been a band director for the last few years. Quite unusually, she had been introduced to the Christmas bands in high school, at a community concert in which her school band performed alongside the Wynberg Progress Christmas Band. She was struck by both the strangeness of the sound (wide variance of intonation, individualistic performance practices) and by the sheer effort made by the band to play together, mostly by ear. In 2002 Susan Arendse, her former primary school music teacher who was assisting the Star of Calvary Christmas Band with the musical direction, approached her to assist the band with the arrangement of the "solo". In the following year, she was again requested to assist the band. This time she was also urged to register as a member, "not realising all that that entailed" (wearing the uniform, committed and active membership, etc.). This allowed her to perform with the band at the competitions. She described herself as a "seasonal band member," working with the band only during the season at the beginning of the year for competition purposes.

When she started working with the band, she was confronted with the daunting task of working with three systems of notation operative within the band. While most of the members read staff notation, around 15 per cent read tonic sol-fa, and yet

another five per cent, usually older members, read without transposing, thus reading everything as if in the key of C major. A small percentage also played by ear and learned by rote. Mr Paul Cipio, an older member who had been their captain for decades, was responsible for teaching the members music and was the one she could turn to for assistance in terms of understanding the third system. Unfortunately, he had suffered a stroke that left him partially paralysed and with a very bad speech defect; consequently, my interview with him was not very successful.

The unconventional sound of the band went against all her musical training and it would have been natural for her to change their performance practices to more conventional ones for a more homogeneous sound quality. However, she resisted the urge to alter the sound of the band, as she felt that it was unique to them and constituted the "authentic sound" of the Christmas bands. She also realised that she could learn from the members' musical experiences and expertise, especially learning to play by ear and to use the different notation systems.

While most bands are striving towards using staff notation – it is certainly preferred for the competitions – some older members had learned tonic sol-fa notation. This notation system was taught to vocalists and choirs, particularly at churches and church schools. In former years, the instrumentalists often transferred this knowledge onto the instruments, teaching themselves to decipher this system. As explained earlier, some churches introduced another system to their brass bands, in which they learned from piano scores and did not learn to transpose the music correctly. In these cases, the members' reading skills were severely limited and they played all music without transposing. While I was not initially aware of this latter problem with reading staff notation, as St Joseph's was not affected by this limitation, several other band directors mentioned it to me. In Rochelle Klassen's case, she had to negotiate three different systems of notation reading, two of which she had to familiarise herself with as she directed the band.

What emerged from my interview with Rochelle is the issue of sound, including negotiating the dichotomies of Western/traditional; conventional/authentic; good/bad; refined/raw; and sophisticated/unsophisticated. In her dealings with the band, Rochelle constantly negotiated her sophisticated musical knowledge and training with the amateur but enthusiastic interests of the band members. This negotiation involved treading a fine line between demanding too much change of the musical status quo, which might turn enthusiasts away, and enough training for success at the competitions. This situation also existed with other, younger, musically trained band members such as Byron Abrahams.

Byron Abrahams, Good Hope Christmas Band, Grassy Park

Byron represented the musically educated young Christmas band members. He was a student at the South African College of Music (SACM) at the University of Cape Town and successfully ran a young jazz band that performed in commercial venues in the suburbs of Cape Town. He was drawn to the Christmas band through curiosity: he was the neighbour of the president of the Good Hope Christmas Band. Every year the band came to perform at his neighbour's home and their neat orderly presentation of themselves parading respectably down his street attracted him to the band. "If you see these people parading down the street, you know, with shiny trophies and it always looked nice because their clothing was always neat and it was always clean." His younger brothers joined the band first. Byron had learned to play the piano at primary school, then, when he desired to play the saxophone at high school, his music teacher secured him the use of an instrument through the Good Hope Christmas Band. He believes that he obtained the use of the instrument on the understanding that he would join the band, "that was kind of the 'contract', you know. Just a verbal thing, 'oh, you going to come and join the band, eh?'" He formally joined the band then and became actively involved as a member, being elected onto the executive as an assistant secretary when he was still in high school. As his musical expertise grew, he became more involved in the direction of the competition "solo".

He prefers to refer to his role as "music liaison", maintaining that "the captain takes care of everything" and he is involved in some training and direction for the competitions. He says he "just jumped in there" when a rather arrogant music teacher who assisted the band with the competition pieces decided to stay away. He was really proud of himself when the band did not do too badly in the union competitions in both the "junior" and "senior" "solos". When I interviewed him in 2008, he had been training the band for three years. He was no longer on the executive structure but still enjoyed the music and tried to maintain its authenticity. What follows is a rather long excerpt of an interview in which he slowly reveals that it is important to maintain the authenticity of the Christmas band sound.

BA: So I'm still trying to keep it… to keep that band at least still, like for *jum jum jum Woensdag en Saterdag, Woensdag en Saterdag.*[27]

SB: Authentic?

BA: Authentic.

SB: How do you do that?

BA: Well, I have written some stuff for the band that's like really serious arrangements of gospel songs. But I think… I try not [to] let them play like other harmonies like sharp nines and stuff like that… even nines.

SB: Okay, so you keep basic harmony…

BA: Keep basic harmony so that it will stay there, forever.

SB: So, it's more like hymn playing?

BA: Hymn playing, yah. There is harmony but it's not like advanced. Not like harmonies we [at university] use.

SB: Okay, so in terms of the harmony, you keep it simple.

BA: In terms of the harmony, I try and keep it very simple.

SB: And then how else do you get the authentic sound?

BA: Aesthetically, I don't tell them to not use vibrato. Because that is what it's all about: it's all about vibrato. Anyhow, it's all about that.

SB: Who does the vibrato in terms of age groups, mainly the older men or right across the board?

BA: What happens in a string band is that the older men or the older members of the band normally teach the younger members. So if the older member has vibrato the younger member will also have it because that is how…

SB: It gets passed down.

BA: It gets passed down.

SB: So, is that still happening in your band, the older guys are still teaching the younger guys?

BA: The older guys are still teaching the younger guys. And you can hear that they got the… that same ways of playing. Okay, it's very frustrating sometimes because [he thinks to himself] ok you can ease up on the vibrato you know?

SB: Okay, so its simple harmonies…

BA: Simple harmony.

SB: Vibrato…

BA: Vibrato. I guess the rest… well, though it is still what is basically then…

SB: How about intonation? Do you work with them on intonation?

BA: I only work on intonation when it's "solo" time. I don't work on intonation at other times because it doesn't really matter. It doesn't matter at all, actually.

SB: Why doesn't it matter?

BA: Because that is the string band sound.

SB: Christmas band; they're no longer string bands.

BA: That is the Christmas band sound.

SB: So you think it's important to maintain that?

BA: I do. I do because well, most of these Christmas bands don't have even guitars anymore. All they use is these big tubas and stuff. Well, of course they've got people… the people in the band come from the military bands around the country, police band, the old warden band.

SB: Warden band?

BA: Yes, the Pollsmoor band. And, of course, the army band, then the navy band. So, there's lots of involvement from that side.

SB: Are there any people in your band involved in those bands?

BA: Yes, there are; yes, there are at least one or two people.

SB: Okay.

BA: Well, they're not… in our band; we do have people from the air force and the navy.

SB: Do they play in the bands though, or are they just part of the air force? And are they band members?

BA: They're not from the air force band or from the navy band.

SB: Because there's quite a difference [working for the forces/services and playing in their bands].

BA: They're not from the air force or navy bands but they are from the navy.

SB: That's quite different. So, do you think… it seems to me you think that the authentic Christmas band sound is very important to maintain?

BA: Well, it is because it's… to me that's heritage. It's like you can't go to Cuba if you want to hear a jazz funeral. That's in New Orleans. You can't go to Rio de Janeiro if you want to hear *klopse*. That's in Cape Town, you know.

It emerges clearly here that Byron is acutely aware of the elements of the Christmas band sound and its uniqueness (by referring to the *klopse*) in terms of other iconic places with sonic references, such as New Orleans. There is almost a nostalgia for the more typical aesthetics – hymns with simple harmonies, disregard for intonation, presence of vibrato, use of guitars – and even in his reference to them as a string band. Although he now realises that that particular sound is their heritage, Byron found it very frustrating initially as a young jazz student to play the simple melodies and harmonies typical of a Christmas band. Besides, he did not always appreciate the Christmas band aesthetics then as he did later on. The older men who wanted to maintain the religious nature of the music did not appreciate his jazz playing either.

In an interview with two of the founding members of Good Hope Christmas Band, Stanley and Hermanus de Wet (01/21/08), they expressed their concern that the band's sound had changed over the last few years. They complained: "The youth of today play the music less reverently than it should be played by adding in variations and improvisations that do not belong." They felt that this kind of playing, influenced by contemporary gospel music and jazz, was ruining the original sound of Christmas bands and may lead to their downfall. This, together with irreverent dress – boys wearing earrings and not dressing neatly – was not Christian-like, nor how the Christmas bands operated in the past.

Nevertheless, Byron also shows ambivalence towards maintaining this musical heritage as he can musically appreciate the work of others who have brought more standardised practices and aesthetics into the bands.

BA: It's [sound of Christmas bands] very different.

SB: Yes, they have their uniqueness also. So, what do you think of the people who do come from police bands and so on who clearly have an influence in their bands and are changing that sound from the Christmas band sound as we know it to a more wind band sound?

BA: I think it's a good thing because it would mean that they need to practise a lot because getting that sound is not easy.

SB: The wind band sound?

BA: Getting the wind band sound isn't easy because that's professional world, or music from the professional world.

SB: But, yet, it's destroying the Christmas band sound, hey?

BA: It is. It is destroying the Christmas band sound. But it would mean that, you know, they're practising a lot which means they've got the children there practising and it keeps children off the streets and things like that. So, in that way it's a good thing. But I don't think that it's good that the whole Christmas band sound is dying out, you know.

SB: It's a tough one, hey? Because musically people are becoming more proficient but on the other hand the sound…

BA: The sound's…

SB: The Cape Town sound that people have grown up with is disappearing.

BA: It's disappearing, yah.

SB: So, you've been involved with Christmas bands for about eight years?

BA: For about eight years.

SB: Have you witnessed any trends, when you arrived it was like this, and perhaps now it's a bit different and in what sense would that be?

BA: Well, Christmas bands don't… it's like the changes are very little because especially when I got there and, obviously, I was on this whole jazz trip figuring out what music is actually all about. And then you come there and now you sit and play and, obviously, you don't want to play that – harmonies that they're playing – you want to play other stuff. So, there's lots of frustration in that regard because the older musicians don't understand it, firstly. You hear things like, "that music is from the devil! Why are you playing that? That's from the devil, it's not right." Other things I've come across is like when I used to take the band for rehearsals, then if you want to rectify somebody, they'd say "hey, *ek blaas al vyftag jaar. Wat wil djy vir my kom vertel? Djy's nog 'n laaitie, djy wiet niks! Djy kom nou die dag*." ["I've been blowing (playing) for fifty years. What can you tell me? You're still a kid; you know nothing!"] You know, that kind of thing.

SB: So, is this when you're [correcting] them in your position as the band [leader]…?

BA: It's a bit difficult because, okay, you are the front person and you're supposed to lead…

SB: But they don't quite give you the respect?

BA: Yah, they don't give you the respect.

SB: Is this when you point out to a particular person?

BA: Yah, when I point out to somebody that it's not working. Because sometimes… like obviously, two different people's vibrato is going to be different because it's two different people. So, it creates a problem because if you've got one long note that's played, that has to be played, and if there are two people that have to play that same note, it's two different vibratos, so you can imagine what it's going to sound like!

SB: And so you try and have them ease up on the vibrato? (Something he had alluded to earlier).

BA: Yes, I do. So sometimes it becomes a problem and people have actually left the band because of stupid things like that.

SB: Really, because you said it to them?

BA: No, I wouldn't say it was because of me. But yah, I guess the whole thing whereby, you know, there's too many chiefs!

In this excerpt, we sense Byron's frustrations teaching older members who are loath to be taught by a younger, educated band director, and the challenges he faces accommodating aesthetic principles that he has been socialised to hear as incorrect. Also inherent in comments like "that music is from the devil" are values around good (Christian) and bad (jazz) music, which relate to their ideas around respectability.

In conclusion

As a lecturer at the SACM at the University of Cape Town, I have a certain status within the Christmas Bands Movement and I am deferred to musically. I have been called upon to represent the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union when the pieces for the board competitions are selected. I directed St Joseph's at the competitions for many years and other bands have also hinted that I should come and assist them, as they need me more than St Joseph's does. I am particularly well placed, especially since some of my colleagues are the adjudicators at these events, and St Joseph's has benefited from input from my colleagues, who are wind players or directors of bands, at specially arranged rehearsals at the SACM before competitions. In October 2005, I was approached to be the musical director of the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union. This portfolio would have required my assistance in arranging workshops for wind instruments, giving musical direction to the other eight bands in the union, and possibly beyond that, to the SAUCBB. The suggestion that I be approached for this position came from one of the other bands in the union, not St Joseph's, and to the union members it seemed a logical choice.

However, I was faced with a certain dilemma: to what extent do I, as a researcher and classically trained musician, become involved with the bands? In particular, the dilemma was around the issue of sound: how do I include my university colleagues who adhere to Western aesthetic principles of sound production in workshops when the characteristic sound of the Christmas bands is so different? I was concerned that, with the increasing involvement of classically trained musicians as teachers of the younger members, or as adjudicators at the competitions, and my own position in the bands' structures, this characteristic sound might be affected and disappear, further distancing the bands from their supporters. I declined the position for the above reasons as well as being too swamped with my academic work, which was the reason I gave the union.

I was therefore delighted at the responses I received from some of the band directors and adjudicators whom I interviewed, who were equally sensitive to this unique sound, and were not interested in changing it entirely, and also struggled with assisting the bands to correct certain inaccuracies while not disturbing the total sound effect. Both Rochelle Klassen and Byron Abrahams commented on this aspect

and were mindful of the performative tension between competitive performances versus community performances. Sean Kierman (adjudicator) was also keen that the bands retain their "authentic" sound while advising them on good playing habits. In my interview with him, I asked him about changes in the band:

SB: So the repertoire hasn't really changed, perhaps, but the style of playing?

SK: The approach has changed.

SB: Due to your involvement in terms of commentary as an adjudicator?

SK: There have been plenty of other people who have been involved, post-me in a sense, but most of them have given the same kind of commentary. Also with the widening of the instrumentation of the bands, the most advanced of them use quite a bunch of clarinets and that, in itself, just brings, I think, the process of trying to balance the band so that the clarinets can be heard, also has tended to refine things. Also, the clarinet is arguably the most intrinsically musical instrument of the wind group and so if it's played at all well it's going to make a musical effect.

SB: So have you only been involved as an adjudicator?

SK: I've run a couple of workshops for them yah, concentrating to some degree on the brass side but also talking a lot about good habits in terms of the development of a good saxophone sound and obviously looking at tuning in much greater detail. I mean that's something I can authentically contribute; is to make sure that from the outset of a performance that the instruments are basically in tune with each other.

Sean Kierman was quite adamant that it was important to maintain the unique and authentic sound of the bands but to improve on the sound through constructive commentary. This seems like keeping a fine and tricky balance, which might not be impossible. The bands themselves have paved the way through their own bifurcation of the performance contexts, thereby maintaining their "authentic" sound for when it would be appreciated, at community events, and adhering to more conventional standards of "proper" playing when it counted, at the annual competitions. This, in itself, is a tricky endeavour and I do wonder for how long they will be able to maintain this balancing act.

The Christmas Bands Movement is a clear case of a musical practice moving from orality towards musical literacy over the years. The interplay between orality and literacy has had a long history in ethnology and folklore, as noted by Kenneth George (1990). In her article "Orality, literacy and music's creative potential" Campbell (1989, 31) points out that "written musical notation tends to be a phenomenon of

literate societies and social classes." The experience of the Christmas bands seems to be similar: as members became more literate, they generally wanted to duplicate this in their musical training. Aspiring to reading musical notation went along with aspirations of middle-class sophistication, notions of self-respect and perhaps even an underlying desire for full citizenship.

Notes

1 See also note 1, Chapter 2.

2 The return of the violin is also noticeable at the Malay choir competitions, which previously only allowed for string instruments such as the guitars, banjos and mandolins. While some Malay choirs hire string players such as violinists and cellists, others have encouraged their own members to take up these instruments.

3 There is always an undercurrent of racism when using this expression, likewise in this context.

4 A similar case is that of Zoliswa Twana's research on prison choirs (2011), in which she found that prisoners proudly hold the music in front of them when they sing in rehearsals, but it is often held upside-down. I am grateful to Christine Lucia for this information.

5 A newspaper cutting from the *Cape Argus*, 3 March 1962 ("Competition for bands", 1962) mentions the hymn "Count Your Blessings" as the competition piece for the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union.

6 Kinaesthetic here refers to the "memory of touch-patterns" (Paterson 2007, 44) and sense of movement in repetitive performances when learning to play a piece of music on an instrument. This memory resides in the fingers and is similar to movements such as writing, walking, dancing, swimming, skating, and so forth, where "the motor idea itself sinks below the threshold of consciousness and only the expression remains" (Smith 1896, 454).

7 Some well-known musical families are the Gamba, Schilder and Dyers families, who were influential in the development of dance band music and Cape Town jazz. In North Indian Hindustani music, such lineages, literal or symbolic, are called *gharānās*; in the West, they are referred to as musical dynasties (see Slawek 1988). Such familial lineages are common to many cultures, for instance the *Mandinka* hereditary musicians and the Austrian Strauss dynasty.

8 UNISA is the acronym for the University of South Africa.

9 This was in the early 1980s, which confirms Wally Witbooi's date when he was asked when playing music from notation became official in the competitions.

10 In fact, the guitarists and banjo players in St Joseph's do not read music and this may well be the situation in other bands, though they may have learned to play more chords than just the basics and they no longer accompany the band in the competitions pieces that are in more difficult keys.

11 As a board member of the Western Cape Street Bands in 2008, I often heard this view expressed by the two *klops* practitioners, Melvyn Matthews from the *Kaapse Klopse Karnival* (Cape Town Carnival) Association and Dennis Petersen from KenFac (Kensington/Factreton; two neighbouring communities) Community Entertainment.

12 Meaning older brother, a common form of respectful address for a man in Afrikaans.

13 Ms Klaasen is a music graduate who assisted one of the bands. I discuss her more fully in Chapter 6.

14 I interviewed Mr Sprinkle in the summer of 2001 when I first came to identify a research community and possible research topic. When I returned in 2003, he had passed away.

15 Buchanan (1995, 390) writes about a similar case of professionalisation and standardisation of *narodna muzika* (Bulgarian folk music) starting in the 1950s in which an "aural notational mimetic method" was adopted and both aural and Western staff notational reading skills were emphasised. Besides aspiring to the hierarchical values of an elite cultural practice, this process of professionalisation also discouraged any form of traditional improvisation.

16 In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1986, *passim*) writes at length about this inferiority complex of the creolised Caribbean male.

17 This is a pseudonym.

18 Pollsmoor is the notorious prison where many political prisoners were taken during the anti-apartheid struggle.

19 After working very closely with the band for a number of years and being elected in the position of assistant bandmaster for three years, I too "gave way" as I felt that perhaps my position there was engendering a dependency that did not bode well for the band. After I discreetly left the 2008 Annual General Meeting before elections took place, thereby intentionally not making myself available for an executive position, Chris Peterson was appropriately elected to the position of assistant bandmaster.

20 I had a few lessons on the clarinet years before and picked it up again to play with St Joseph's. My first instrument is the piano.

21 Although an adult himself, this player often referred to the bandmaster as "daddy" because, as he explained to me, he respected him so much for his musical proficiency and expert guidance.

22 Mr Mouton passed away in 2006.

23 A similar sonic equivalent would be New Orleans brass bands, particularly within the context of the jazz funeral (see Schafer and Allen 1977).

24 The director had previously opposed me vehemently at a board meeting in which I supported the idea that the musical director of the board should give each band a pre-arranged score of the 2008 "solo" rather than have individual band directors arrange it. I discuss the matter in Chapter 5.

25 One of my university students who attended the practice with me also commented on this aspect and their discipline in general.

26 Rochelle's contributions are further explored in Chapter 6, along with those of other female musical instructors.

27 *Jum jum jum* is onomatopoeic for the characteristic sound of the guitar/banjo and *ghoema* drum. *Woensdag en Saterdag* ("Wednesday and Saturday") referencing the sometimes nonsensical lyrics of the *moppies* (comic songs) of the Malay choirs and *klopse*.

5

Militarism in the bands: Christmas bands competitions

> The symbols of social order – the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and waving flags – are at one and the same time inhibitory and stimulating. (Fanon, 1986 xxii–xxiii)

I turn now to an exploration of the larger community's notions of respectability as expressed through moments of spectacle in the annual Christmas bands competitions.[1] Cultural competitions by subaltern groups, much like festivals, carnivals and parades, are part of the discursive strategies of the powerless that involve community spectacles of visual and sonic display. They construct alternate social spaces, and engage notions of selfhood, dignity, power and collective identity. In his incisive analysis of the Olympic games, John MacAloon (1984, 243) has shown that "Spectacles give primacy to visual, sensory and symbolic codes; they are things to be seen." Spectacles are events often seen by spectators *en masse*, and, as Beeman (1993, 379–380) argues, it is the presence of an observing and evaluating audience rather than a participatory one that differentiates spectacle from other kinds of ritual, sports, and games: "Spectacle is a public display of a society's central meaningful elements. Parades, festivals and other such events occur at regular intervals and are frequently deeply meaningful for a society."

Like festivals and carnivals, cultural competitions are not merely public displays of cultural identity, but ritual spaces in which human drama is symbolically intensified, and, as such, they are important spaces for the public creation of cultural meaning. In their glamorous showcasing of ordinary subjectivities dressed in their finery on the day of the big event, competitions have become the *raison d'être* of many cultural organisations in the Western Cape, as elsewhere. It is in the spectacle of Christmas bands' parades and competitions, I contend, that people – performers and spectators

– find meaning in their lives; it is through these activities that they enact a dignity and respectability denied them by history and still denied them because of their ongoing social and cultural marginalisation in the present.

It is not just meaning but self-knowledge that they find, in terms of Foucault's notion of an aesthetic of the self or moral agency referred to earlier, wherein one can "know oneself" (Foucault 2003c in Rabinow and Rose 2003, 149). Members of the Christmas Bands Movement as individual subjectivities and as a collective, I argue, learn to "know themselves" through the annual competitions even more than they do through the annual rituals discussed in previous chapters, largely because of the element of spectacle. This cultural knowing of the self is thus very strongly transmitted from one generation to the next through the preparations and enactment of the annual competitions.

Background to the competitions

The purpose of all the competitions held every year between January and March by community musical organisations in the Western Cape is to decide which is the best – the best Christmas band, *klops* (carnival troupe) or Malay choir. The board competitions of the Christmas bands occur annually, while the board championships may occur only biennially, but some unions have more than one competition annually, with some Christmas bands competing in as many as three or four competitions during the season. Thus, every year from January through March, hundreds of Christmas band members spend several evenings a week as well as weekends in their clubhouses learning the competition pieces. During this time, the bands, which usually enjoy friendly relationships, become arch rivals as they compete in the different categories, including "solo", "best drum major", "best-dressed band", "grand march past", and "best banner". The "solo" category is the most prestigious, with the largest trophy. In this category, the bands must render a prescribed musical item, often a classical favourite.

The competitions were instituted in the 1940s. According to Mr Hannes September, three members from different bands (Mr September from the St Joseph's Christmas Band, Mr Davidson from Young Guiding Stars, and Mr Nicholson from Midnight Stars), together with a schoolteacher (Mr du Plooy from Palmerston Primary School in Wynberg) and a social worker (Mrs Benjamin), proposed the idea of competitions (HS 7/25/01). For two years, they ran what were referred to as "open competitions", which took place in town halls. These were less formalised than they became later, with about nine bands participating. Only two categories were adjudicated: the one sonic (the prescribed piece) and the other visual (the "best-dressed band"). The motivation for having competitions was to raise money for the coloured soldiers participating in

World War II and their cash-strapped families. Later in the year, there was another competition to raise money for the bands themselves (HS 7/25/01). This charitable aspect was in keeping with the very old objective of collecting alms for churches in the earliest renditions of Christmas band practice in the 1850s (*Cape Argus* 1857 cited in Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 195). In 1942, the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union was established and competitions became more formally organised. They were held at stadiums and the proceeds went to the union, while the bands received a pro rata share of the gate-takings based on the number of tickets each band sold (HS 05/16/05). This situation still prevails.

Anyone who has participated in a music or cultural competition is well aware of the tensions experienced up to and including the actual event. Despite the anxiety and drama that accompany them, music competitions are surprisingly common events, particularly in South Africa. As mentioned in the history of the Christmas Bands Movement in Chapter 2, the sporting element is typical: not only are the Christmas bands competitions held at stadiums where sports events customarily take place, the band members also refer to their practice as their sport, to their headquarters as the clubhouse, and to their jackets as sports blazers. Historically, there is a link between the two pastimes: the parading practices in Cape Town grew out of the end-of-year celebrations of sports clubs that were dormant during the festive season.[2] In the next two sections, I provide a detailed ethnographic description, in two parts, of one particular union competition day in 2006.

Getting ready for the union competition[3]

Members of the St Joseph's Christmas Band arrive at the clubhouse at 8 am on 12 February 2006 for the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union's Annual Competition. They put the final touches to their dress: ties have to be knotted in exactly the same manner for the "best-dressed band" category in the competition, so Chris Petersen, the captain, is placed in charge of knotting everyone's tie. This year their uniforms are grey trousers, shoes and hat, with a teal blazer and a red floral tie. There is excitement in the air as they wait for everyone to arrive. The men joke with each other, they talk about which band they will "put to shame" this year, they boast about their prowess at competitions and the fact that their record of winning the "solo" category for nine consecutive years in the union competitions is still unbeaten. The children are restless, playing with each other, running around; the men shout at them to stop running and to keep their uniforms clean. Members are slow in arriving. Besides, they are waiting for the grey shoes that were made in Worcester[4] and have yet to arrive.

One of the members had left for Worcester in the early hours of the morning to collect the shoes, which were made cheaply through a contact there. But the delay seems to indicate

a problem, which the members are not informed about although increasingly there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and murmuring to that effect. Finally, when everyone has arrived and is stylishly dressed, minus the grey shoes, there is a short meeting with words of encouragement from the chairperson and bandmaster. A church minister has been specially asked to present them with an appropriate Bible reading with explication, and a prayer. After all, this is an extremely significant year for the band as they celebrate their seventieth year.

The secretary, whose brother-in-law is the one who agreed to collect the shoes, is visibly upset and it is obvious that she has been crying. When I asked her later what had upset her so, she said that she could not bear the tension. Eventually, she receives a telephone call to say that her brother-in-law will meet the band at the Vygieskraal stadium where the competition is taking place, since he will not make it to the clubhouse before the competition starts. Just before leaving, they play the "solo" piece for the last time, outside, in front of the clubhouse. This ritual, besides setting the scene, as it will be the last time they perform it before the competition, also seems to signal to the neighbours that competition day has arrived, thus they will know to look out for the band's hopefully victorious return. The band boards the bus and sets off for the stadium.

Usually the mood in the bus is very jolly, with members playing their favourite songs until they reach the stadium. Today a sombre mood has descended and only a few brave ones venture to blow their instruments, softly. When they reach the stadium, the other bands are already entering the arena and loud cheering is audible from their supporters. Without the matching shoes, the band's stylish new uniform is severely compromised – they can forget about entering the "best-dressed band" category – so they wait for what seems an inordinate amount of time before the shoes appear. Then complete chaos ensues as the car trunk and all the doors are opened and boxes of shoes piled high are passed out to about 60 band members. Names are called out curtly and there is a scramble as members try to reach for their shoes amidst the circle enclosing those members handing out the shoes. The youngest children have to be assisted, as they are unable to lace their shoes. Some shoes do not fit and there is bartering of shoes and trying on, or just extreme disappointment or annoyance, directing questions at no one in particular, "Now what do I do, my shoes don't fit!" The shoes are of a poor quality and tempers rise as members direct complaints at the band: "This band will never come right!" "Why get someone in Worcester when there are people who can make shoes in Cape Town?" "Look how badly these shoes are made!" "Do they call these shoes?" Once everyone is fitted with a pair of grey shoes, well fitted or ill fitting, they enter the stadium in their most dignified manner.[5]

They are warned at the gate that they cannot accompany themselves with music because the proceedings have already begun. So, there is no grand entry march in front of the stands and their supporters in this most important anniversary year of celebration. However, once

their supporters realise that they have finally entered, the stand erupts with applause and shouts of "St Joseph's!" and the proceedings have to be put on hold for a while anyway. Once they have settled down, performance mode takes over and they band together and do what is expected of them. In fact, by the end of the day, they do so well that they take first place in many of the categories and win the trophy for overall "best band". The sweetest award of the day, there is no doubt, is winning the "best-dressed band" category.

In a book detailing the history of the Leeds Piano Competitions, Wendy Thompson and Fanny Waterman quote several participants and organisers on what competitions mean to them. For example, "Competitions are a valuable experience whether you win or lose" (1990, 91), and even, "competitions are a necessary evil" (87). The authors assert that "A competition is a highly wrought emotional experience. It's like a bullfight – and like any blood sport, it draws the crowds" (93). But as my account of competition day in February 2006 shows, competitions can be tension-filled events that seem to test the patience and personal reserves of the competitors. They are also contentious events, and they convey critical evaluation in a highly public manner. Competitions mostly assume an atmosphere of friendly rivalry, yet the Christmas bands' competitions do not turn out in this way; they are often fraught with controversy and emotional levels can run the entire gamut from complete elation to utter despair. So why do members of the Christmas bands subject themselves to this phenomenon – this "necessary evil" – annually? Moreover, what do the audience members and their supporters gain from it, as a spectacle? To try to find answers to these questions, I describe in some detail a typical union competition day, dwelling particularly on the interface between bands, supporters and the announcer who provides continuity.

The City and Suburban Union Competition

From mid-morning on a designated Sunday, buses and cars arrive from all over the Cape Peninsula and further afield in the Western Cape, bringing Christmas bands and their supporters to a designated stadium. While the supporters file in and take their seats on the stands, the bands line up outside in marching band formation, three or four abreast, depending on the size of the band, with the three drum majors ahead of each band. While waiting for all the bands to arrive, the instrumentalists warm up by practising the difficult sections of the "solo" and the drum majors practise their steps and twirling of the mace. Inside the stadium, the announcer is "warming up" the spectators by jesting with them about the possibilities the day holds for the bands. When most bands are ready, they make a grand entry into the arena, one at a time, with a short break after each band. They walk in a strict march tempo accompanied by the horns and strings. Two members at the back of each marching

Figure 9 An enthusiastic supporter blowing the *vuvuzela*.

file carry the banner of the band. As soon as the next band enters, the announcer gives their name and the band's supporters cheer vociferously, shouting the band's name or even individual names of band members. Nowadays, the cheering is often punctuated by the *vuvuzela*,[6] adding to the sports-like atmosphere.

Each band then moves to its designated place at the far end of the field, opposite the grandstand. Once all the bands are in place, the announcer welcomes everybody and calls on the bands to come to the front of the stadium. One or two bands usually play a march (this is arranged beforehand) and all the bands converge in front of the grandstand. An executive member of the union addresses the gathering, again welcomes everyone, and reads special announcements.[7] Then a religious minister or lay preacher is called upon to read a short message from the Bible and to share words of encouragement with the bands. The speakers usually address the notion of competition specifically: they talk about a code of fairness on the day, of maintaining a sporting attitude of competitive rivalry, and appeal to band members and their supporters to accept the adjudicators' decisions, reminding the bands that they play

music to glorify the name of the Lord and not for their own self-interest or gain. Then the competition is declared open and all the bands proceed back to their designated places accompanied by the same spirited march.

Several categories are adjudicated on the day, which are repeated for each division: "tiny tots", "juniors" and "seniors". The drum major in each division is adjudicated on his or her ability to lead the "grand march past" and to address and execute salutes to the adjudicator concerned, as well as expert handling of the mace. The banners are adjudicated either after the "solo" category before lunch, or after the "grand march past" category before the end of the competition. The grand entry march (entering the stadium) is no longer adjudicated in the SAUCBB, but was still adjudicated in the WPCCB until they disbanded.

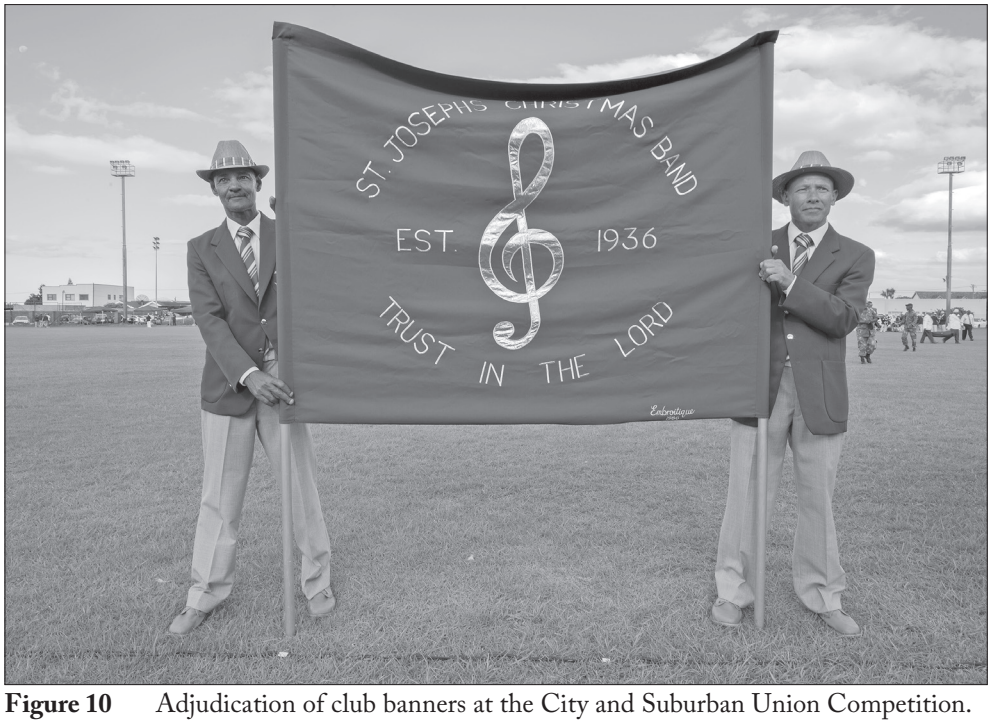


Figure 10 Adjudication of club banners at the City and Suburban Union Competition.

The "solo"

The first category adjudicated is the "solo", in which a group of band members – from 10 to 50 or more, depending on the size of the band – perform the prescribed competition pieces. In the union competitions, there are two "solo" categories: the "junior solo" is a hymn sung by the children, such as "I'll be a Sunbeam" by Nellie Talbot or "He loves me too" by Maria Straub, and the "senior solo" is an instrumental

piece played by the best performers in the band.[8] The "junior solo" receives minimal attention, the audience being rather indulgent of the youngsters' singing, but the "senior solo" is crucial for the band's identity as a contender. It is either a light classical piece or an orchestrated religious piece, arranged by the bandmaster for the instrumentation of the band. Light classical pieces range from "The Lost Chord" by Sullivan or "In a Monastery Garden" by Ketelbey to the "Intermezzo" from *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni, or "Meditation" from *Thaïs* by Massenet. Orchestrated religious music such as "Sun of my Soul" by Edmund Turner or "Praise Waiteth" by Richard Smallwood are popular and form the staple of the bands' competition repertoire handed down through the generations, and they might be prescribed twice in a decade. The choice of repertoire is evocative of their aspirations for both middle-class respectability and modernity.

The "solo" is not for one instrument as it is understood in Western art music – all the most competent band members usually participate – but the word reflects the sense of aspiration to an elite cultural practice and is therefore appropriated. The bandmaster is given a copy of the score, often an arrangement for "solo" voice or choir and piano, a few months prior to the competition, and appropriately rearranges it, most often for two sets of wind quartets (or more parts if the accompaniment is complex). The instrumental parts are doubled, tripled or quadrupled, depending on the number of performers on an instrument. This kind of arrangement can lead to an unbalanced sound, but the bandmaster must weigh this against the prestige of performing in the competitions. Anyone left out will feel severely snubbed, so this decision is always a difficult one for the bandmaster to negotiate.

The trend, these days, is for the bands to overwhelm their rivals with an exciting arrangement for a large ensemble. Such an arrangement would include a

Figure 11 The St Joseph's Christmas Band performing the "solo" at a Christmas bands competition in 2011.

dense harmonic structure with several musical lines performed by different wind instruments, foregrounding sections of the wind ensemble at different points in the music. The larger bands are more spectacular in their performative effects, appealing to the audience's musical sensibilities by foregrounding the sounds of unusual instruments such as sousaphones and bass tubas contrasted with flutes and clarinets, and by excessive contrasts in dynamics. The bands clearly model themselves on the symphony orchestra, adhering to strict discipline at rehearsals, with the conductor being the unquestioned authority. Unlike a symphonic performance, however, the emphasis is on the spectacular nature of the visual or sensory experience along with the auditory. The audience may erupt into applause at any moment to show their appreciation of timbral and dynamic contrasts, almost drowning out these carefully staged effects.

The unique arrangement of the "solo" provided by the band director is a matter of pride for the band. In 2007, at a SAUCCB annual general meeting, the board's musical director gave each band a pre-arranged score of the 2008 "solo" rather than have individual band directors arrange it as per usual. Many bands opposed this idea vehemently, which I failed to understand, so I supported the director in his endeavour at musical uniformity. My reasoning was that each band would be given a fair chance to perform a good arrangement, as I have heard arrangements that vary considerably in standard over the years. I thought that this would be an ideal way of levelling the playing fields, thereby giving each band a competitive edge. The band members' reasoning, I learned later, was that they wanted to arrange the music to suit their particular bands, rather than have it arranged for an anonymous ensemble that might not include their peculiar group of instruments. In this way, they could imbue the piece with their band's unique identity rather than have this decided by someone else. I realised my naïveté after talking to Chris Petersen of St Joseph's Christmas Band, who clarified this reasoning to me. Besides, the bands' arrangement only emerges in their performance on the morning of competition and is another aspect of the nature of the performance as a spectacle. St Joseph's were known for a particular musical identity due to the more unusual arrangements of their (now late) band director, Wally Witbooi. The band was particularly vehement in their opposition to the new-fangled ideas of the board's musical director and decided not to participate in the "solo" category. This sparked heated discussion in both the union and the board, and, in the end, the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union took a decision to boycott the "solo" category in the board's "A" competition of 2008. A principled decision like this obviously jeopardises the bands tremendously, but the point they were making seemed far more important than the goal of winning.

A contradiction to the usually receptive attitude towards classically inspired orchestrated music played in competitions was discussed in Chapter 3, in which I

asserted that the supporters preferred hearing religious music, particularly at religious community events. Many bands still proffer hymns as prescribed pieces for the competitions. Mr Sprinkle suggested that the Athlone and Districts Christmas Bands Union should select "prescribed pieces that everybody knows" so that the "people [sitting] on the stands can hum the tune along" (CS 07/19/01). However, the more competitive bands prefer the challenge of performing Western art music in the board competitions. Western art music within the bands thus has a particular and confined place: at competitions where support for the bands is most obvious and the supporters are quite varied, ranging widely in age groups as well. At this event, the spectators enjoy close listening to the bands' arrangements and renditions of classical favourites. They often cheer when the band changes dynamic levels, illustrating their appreciation, which may seem untimely at a dynamic switch to pianissimo! Throughout the year, the support is often limited to the older and/or more conservative members of the community, so that when the bands perform at religious and other community events, the supporters prefer hearing religiously inspired music.

Nevertheless, the "solo" category is the most prestigious; it not only offers the largest trophy but is essentially what the bands are about: making music together. University professors or teachers at local music institutions often adjudicate this category.

"Best-dressed band"

While some bands are performing the "solo", other bands are simultaneously being inspected for the award for the "best-dressed band". The adjudicators of this category usually come from the navy, army or police service, which gives an indication of what is being looked for. Here the band members do some basic military drilling and stand almost to attention, much like a military review, with the *voorloper* calling out the routine. The spectacle in this category is the tension-filled scene on the side of the field as band members arrange themselves in straight lines with erect and attentive body stances, at arm's length from each other. Once the band is ready for inspection, the *voorloper* reports to the adjudicators, saluting one of them and saying in militaristic tones, "Sir, band number one is ready for inspection, Sir!" She or he salutes again, moves off and takes her or his place at the side of the squad. The adjudicators inspect the insides of the blazers; see whether the colour of the socks and belts match the trousers and whether their ties are knotted in the same way. This category can take quite a while to adjudicate, as all three age categories of the band must present themselves in front of the adjudicators. Again, the attentive supporters applaud to show their appreciation for the proficiency of the band members' execution of this miniaturised military spectacle. In the military context, a parade like this would be accompanied by a display of the might and grandeur of the armaments of the state – a spectacle to instil awe and respect in the subjects of

Figure 12 Uniform inspection.

the state. In the Christmas bands' context, the review does not possess that kind of cultural power, but its significance lies in its symbolic representation of disciplined bodies, splendidly clothed and impeccably matched, notwithstanding the social and economic marginalisation of the wearers.

"Grand march past"

After lunch, the adjudication of the "grand march past" category begins. In this category, members appear before the adjudicators who previously inspected their dress, and the drum major now must lead her or his squad around the stadium arena. Here again, all three age categories are adjudicated, with the "tiny tots" and "junior" *voorlopers* receiving the most applause and squeals from the supporters, not necessarily always because they are executing the march in the strictest fashion. The "tiny tots" become quite distracted with the applause from the crowds on the stands and can surprise their trainers and delight their supporters by uncharacteristically waving at someone in the crowd, or veering off course, while the little *voorloper* struggles to keep them focused on the march.

In this category, immense pressure is placed upon the *voorloper*, who is adjudicated individually for her or his skill in signalling and controlling the band during the march through the expert handling of the mace. The "grand march past" is framed by the interaction of the *voorloper* with the adjudicators: "Sir, band number one is at the ready!" with salutes at the beginning and closing of the march around the arena. In between, the various moves are quite complicated. First, the *voorloper* takes measured paces to stand just ahead of the squad; then, she or he calls out to the band to begin the strict military-style march with the words, "By the left, quick march!" signalling with the mace by jabbing it upward three times. At this signal, the musicians start a march tune and the band parades right around the stadium to enthusiastic applause from their supporters.

St Joseph's enjoys playing "My anchor holds" by William Martin and Daniel Towner for this march; other bands may play "Onward Christian soldiers" or "When the saints go marching in." It is in this category that the *voorloper*'s skills are really tested. She or he has to keep the focus of the entire band for the duration of the "grand march past" and not let them be distracted by the supporters. The *voorloper* must have the correct body stance, alert and upright, and the ability to lead a disciplined squad. If not, the team is simply not a competitor.

Three points during the march are particularly significant for the supporters. First, the *voorloper* has to timeously indicate the taking of each of the three corners with the mace pointed towards the ground. This alerts the band members following to adjust their steps, with the ones in the middle and outside rows, lengthening their steps accordingly so that the platoon remains strictly coordinated. Second, she or he has to acknowledge the union officials who stand to attention in front of the table gleaming with trophies: as the *voorloper* passes them, she or he holds the mace at shoulder height, horizontally across the body with the left hand and arm, while simultaneously saluting with the right hand, face turned to the right to look at the officials. Third, the *voorloper* has to bring the band to a dead halt, with everyone ending on the same foot at the (silent) count of six, after which she or he reports to the adjudicators to give the closing salute. The spectators keenly observe the adeptness of the *voorloper*, especially at key moments, which, when perfectly executed, are greeted with rousing applause. The supporters are particularly proud when the "grand march past" has been well executed. Unlike the "solo", which is the most important category for the band members themselves, there is less mystery around the "grand march past" for the spectators: it is where the visual predominates, rather than the sonic. They judge whether the band did well by following their parade around the stadium, keenly watching them execute all the aspects significant for adjudication. This category can take many hours.

Figure 13 A senior *voorloper* salutes a union official during the "grand march past" category of a competition.

As the bands are completing this category, the tension mounts. Everybody waits in suspense as the points are added up and checked by a group of coordinators comprising executive members from other unions (at union competitions) or two members from each union (at board competitions) to ensure fairness. While the coordinators capture the results given by the adjudicators, the announcer asks the bands to report to the front of the stadium where certain bands render a special item. After they have performed, the supporters are roused again, and keeping up the spirit of competition to the last, try to outdo each other's cheering.

Finally, the results for each category are read, starting at sixth place. The last three places sometimes do not receive much applause but the tension is palpable when the first three places are read, particularly the second. The "solo" category winners are announced just before the overall "best band" and the most commotion happens during the reading of the first two places. Although "best band" is a prestigious category, it sometimes feels like an anti-climax after the excitement of the "solo": an unquestionable demonstration of the important status that the bands' musical performance really has in this context. The "solo" is thus the quintessence of musicality in the context of the bands' competitive performances: repertoire, unique musical arrangement and performance practice are all at stake here.

During my tenure with St Joseph's, the band was often the recipient of the "best band" award. They usually wait for all the other bands to leave and once the area is cleared, St Joseph's sets off, playing their favourite march tune, "My anchor holds", exiting in strict tempo just as they entered. Their supporters are thronging and jostling inside and outside the stadium grounds, waiting for them to appear. When they hear the band's familiar march tune, they start to shout the band's name and applaud loudly. As the band passes through the crowd, their supporters, smiling happily, slap their shoulders and say how well they have done and how proud they are of them. The crowd is often so dense that the usual formation of three abreast has to shrink to a single file to accommodate everybody, and this thronging and jostling continues until they reach their bus.

The bus ride back to the clubhouse is usually quite ebullient too, as the members continue playing many of their favourite tunes. Approaching the clubhouse, the bus driver stops a distance away so that the band can parade in the street. The "juniors" and others who do not play instruments hold the trophies they have won high above their heads, displaying their successes to the neighbourhood. The supporters often follow the bus and join in, marching alongside the band. The neighbours stand at their gates applauding, capturing their success on digital still or video cameras. As the day began, so it ends with the symbolic rendering of a hymn in front of the clubhouse, this time "The day thou gavest, Lord has ended". Finally, the members gather inside the clubhouse for a short meeting to reflect on the day. Members are reminded of the next band activity, and after a final prayer everyone departs.

Every aspect of the competition – from the perspective of both the bands and spectators – illustrates how the bands dynamically preserve an expressive culture for the whole community, as well as how they ritualise the occasion of competition. Aside from the detailed ways in which this is done – through prescribed or stylised behaviour, the wearing of uniforms, the personal constraints imposed upon the competitors and the restrictions placed on membership[9] – the occasion is also ritualised by the framing of the competition day with musical performances. Like bookends, music features at the gate of the clubhouse on leaving, and on returning. At the beginning of the day, this framing device heightens the anticipation of competitive display and spectacle and enhances the team spirit. At the end of the day, it brings closure to an intense collective experience. Through all these framing devices, competitions transform the everyday into the extraordinary, a transformation that is emphasised through the phenomenon of the spectacle.

The contestation of process

A month after the union competitions are held, the best of these bands participate in the South African United Christmas Bands Board competitions. Here there are two levels of competition: one union pitted against another and the bands vying with each other individually. There are two rounds: the bands that were placed in the top three positions at the union competitions perform in the board's "A" competitions and those that gained fourth to sixth positions perform in the "B" competitions. Every second or third year there are also the championship competitions in which the bands that obtained the first three positions in the "A" and "B" competitions compete. The board competitions resemble the union competitions in every respect, except that there are far more bands competing – up to 21 bands – as opposed to between five and ten in the union competitions; and each band entering the stadium represents a union. They compete as individual bands on behalf of the union so that

Figure 14 The Athlone and District Union entering the competition field with the union officials leading the band.

when the prizes are read out, the union's name is read alongside that of the band, for all categories: for example, "St Joseph's Christmas Band of City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union." There is no selection process for the union competitions: all Christmas bands are able to compete annually and then the best of these bands compete in the SAUCBB competitions.

Both have competition rules, which bands often contest, particularly rules in the "solo" category, and these may be reviewed after the competitions because of these contestations. Sometimes rules are then rescinded, only to be reinstated the following year, as band members realise that perhaps the contestation emerged out of self-interest and was not thought through. All of this gives rise to lively and heated debates and is indicative of the democratic nature of the process behind the scenes, in contrast with the seemingly autocratic way the competition itself is run.

Band members often express considerable resentment around competition results, relating stories to substantiate their claim that certain bands always win, and not necessarily because they are good or play the music correctly. "Playing the music exactly as it is written" is a serious matter to many band members. They complain that some bands render a piece that has been substantially altered from the "original score" and do not understand how they can win. This gives rise to suspicion about the adjudicators having some prior connection with particular bands, either advising them on how they expect the piece to be performed or being "paid off" to ensure the first prize. Such serious allegations that do the rounds amongst bands are quite likely unfounded, but it is very hard to convince the members about the professional integrity of adjudicators. I believe this situation may be due to the lack of musical skills amongst band directors who apply a crude interpretation to the music without the contextual knowledge base that accompanies the transmission of Western art music. Thus, the band may play all the correct notes, with a semblance of phrasing, but fall short of rendering an appropriate interpretation of the piece overall, literally interpreting dynamics such as crescendos and decrescendos without consideration of the musical and dynamic effect. Nor is this the only problem; problems with tuning and embouchure are perennial and the instruments are often very old and worn out. The frustration the directors and other members feel when they consistently never win a prize after many months of hard work is understandable.

In 2008, I too came under the attack of the band members of the Athlone and District Union, as a "solo" adjudicator for their first competition. I accepted the invitation because I thought it would be a way for me to attend another union's competitions, as well as to dispel the accusations against adjudicators. Alas, I was accused of favouring the band that took first position in all the musical performances[10] because I "knew the band members". Soon this story travelled to other bands and unions. The band I supposedly favoured was Young Guiding Stars, St Joseph's neighbouring band, with whom they had a very friendly relationship, but I had not been that regularly involved with St Joseph's since 2006, assisting at the competitions only, so I was not necessarily friendlier with the Young Guiding Stars, just acquainted with a few of the members. I wanted to work with the Athlone and Districts Union, which was affiliated with the Western Province Christmas Bands Board, to gain an understanding of how other unions and boards functioned, so I attended a workshop they held in late November 2007 in preparation for the 2008 competitions. Before the workshop began, I spent some time talking to some of the members of Young Guiding Stars whom I recognised, to familiarise them with my project and set dates for interviews and band rehearsals. Clearly, members of other bands noted all this and recalled it after the competition results were read out. I also attended practices of the Peace and Goodwill Christmas Band and Young Guiding Stars soon after the

workshop, but once I had decided to adjudicate this union's competition, I stopped, so that I could not be accused of favouritism. Yet I was, nevertheless, and subsequently wrote a strongly worded letter to the union to explain my position and the unfair situation with which I thought music adjudicators were confronted (see Appendix 3).

The contestable nature of musical assessment at the competitions arises because band members and adjudicators use different assessment criteria: for band members, the score is the absolute authority and is read literally – coinciding with the notion of "why 'the book says' is popularly tantamount to 'it is true'" (Ong 1988, 78). Their aim is to present the unmediated authority of the text. For the adjudicators, the score is merely a representation of the music and they expect musicians to interpret it within the acknowledged aesthetic parameters of Western classical performance. Their literal reading of the text is largely because their musicianship is rather limited, but it also speaks to the "enormous prestige and authority attached to texts and textual practice" (George 1990, 7). Besides ignoring the commonly understood notion that there is at best an elusive relationship between notation and performance (Boynton 2003, 103), it highlights the points made by Campbell (1989, 32) that notational literacy restricts the performer and limits creative expression, especially in the form of improvisation. She also suggests that total attachment to the score can result in a lazy ear and mechanical renderings of music that may deliver none of the personality of the performer (1989, 39).[11] Nonetheless, Christmas bands have always performed music from literate traditions such as hymns and Western art music even though musical transmission during the early years was an oral/aural practice. With the unevenness in musical literacy in both transmission and performance, and the many opportunities during the parades for performance without notation, Christmas bands may yet maintain this balance between strict performances (albeit a literal reading) of the written score at the competitions and more creative, personally expressive performances elsewhere.

One year the City and Suburban Union drew up criteria and distributed them to the "solo" adjudicators. The idea of presenting the adjudicators with the bands' own criteria was, I believe, an attempt at controlling a musical practice that they perceive as uniquely theirs, performing the classical repertoire with its own cultural and musical complexities, their way. Perhaps this need to take ownership of their aesthetic practice relates to their sense of occupying a marginal sociopolitical status: a measure of satisfaction and dignity is maintained even when people outside the practice adjudicate the music. Similar measures of control exist in other cultures (see for example Turino 1997; Hagedorn 2001). Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 4, there remains a tension between performing rather difficult classical pieces acceptably and producing a Christmas band sound.

In South Africa's new democracy post 1994, band directors are aware of the exciting prospects for the youth, believing that they can attain greater heights (musically and socially), and at a workshop of the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union in October 2005 there was a suggestion of using competitions to this end. The proposal by an aspiring, younger, middle-class member was to hand out diplomas to all the youth who participate in the competitions along with trophies to the best bands, a suggestion prompted by two aims: to attract younger members to the bands and to provide certificates that could have some influence if young people wanted to pursue a musical career beyond the band. However, the logistics of how these certificates would compare meaningfully in the eyes of institutions such as university music departments with Trinity College or Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music graded examination certificates could not be fathomed, and the idea was discarded.

Why competitions?

Why are competitions like these such a popular cultural phenomenon? What do they offer the competitors and their supporters? As we have seen, Christmas band competitions are community spectacles of musical and visual display, completely focused toward the local community and symbolically highly significant. Although tourism has played an increasing role in the staging of cultural events since 1994 and participants now perform to a wider audience, the competitions have remained inward reaching, "staged entirely within and for a community" (Stillman 1996, 357–58) rather than becoming more self-consciously folkloric and outward reaching. Photographers from local newspapers may be present at the competitions and occasionally a provincial politician such as the Minister of Culture is invited to address the gathering, but Christmas band members and supporters are hardly concerned with their presence.[12] For them, it is a day for the community, and everything else is secondary. They are in fact generally quite wary, almost disdainful, of participating in larger city events that showcase local culture for media and tourist consumption or for political expediency, as these take away valuable time from the bands, making them wait for hours for a two-second slot on television, for example.[13] Their attitude is that they have been well known for many years and are self-sustaining, and this attitude demands that city officials and the national media treat them with respect and dignity.

What then is the meaning of Christmas band competitions for the community itself? When I posed this question to some of the interviewees, they were unable to express what the competitions meant to them as individuals, bands or a community. Some felt that it was a time for the men to "show off" (AT 07/18/06); others felt

that it would be better to do away with competitions as they were the cause of much conflict within the bands and the unions (CS 07/19/01; AT 07/18/06; DB 01/25/08), and yet another member suggested that the bands be rewarded according to percentages pegged to medals, which would eliminate the friction around winning the first prize (DB 01/25/08). All bands obtaining 91–99 per cent would be awarded a gold medal, and so forth. What was interesting about this suggestion was that it only related to the "solo" section, which again illustrates the privileged status of music performed in the context of Christmas band competitions. Another suggestion was that the competitions be changed into festivals or even just be called festivals (CS 07/19/01; AT 07/18/06; WPCCB competition brochure 1996).

Based on my close observations of and deep participation with the Christmas Bands Movement, I suggest at least three reasons for the importance of the competitions and why they endure. First, they provide competitors with occasions to perform for a larger but still "local" audience, beyond the immediate community of the individual band's members and supporters. Second, they provide opportunities for competitors to evaluate themselves and their peers musically, enabling them to develop critical listening and assessment skills in an atmosphere of friendly rivalry. I assisted St Joseph's with the musical direction of the "solo" piece for several years and I could see how critically the band members had begun to listen to themselves as well as to other bands, usually pointing out where they or other bands did not do well, using the classical music terminology I had used with them. The supporters have also become more critical: although they may not have the musical terminology, they compare and contrast the different bands, and share these opinions with me. This second aspect, then, is improved understanding and appreciation of music.

Third, the competitions are socially significant: they offer a platform on which to excel not only as musicians but also as people, as members of a community, to show their best qualities to their supporters and other competitors. It is a day on which the competitors' status is elevated, when they become the focal point of community pride and cohesion. To an underclass that perceives itself as maligned by the media and generally outside of the national political agenda, these events demonstrate and sanction acceptable displays of public behaviour and ways of being. Until recently, they were male-only practices and, as such, have particular significance as public stagings and sanctions of prescribed male behaviour. This aspect is manifest when the leadership of the organisation addresses bands or church ministers address the community: both authorities comment on the spiralling social depravity confronting the community.

The Western Cape has long been home to notorious gangs, and the abuse of drugs and alcohol is rife. Currently, the use of crystal methamphetamines (*tik*) is particularly rampant and has affected whole families. Community leaders often lash

out against these social ills and direct their focus towards the men, urging them, as members of Christmas bands, to be responsible and respectable fathers and husbands as well as exemplary role models, in particular for their boys. Respect for the self and others is emphasised here, and the notion of moral agency referred to earlier, which allows people to "take care": "He who takes care of himself to the point of knowing exactly what duties he has as master of a household and as a husband and father will find that he enjoys a proper relationship with his wife and child" (Foucault 2003a in Rabinow and Rose 2003, 31); and, I would add, with the community.

Paternalism and masculinity

Despite South Africa's reputation for producing and implementing the most progressive constitution in the world in which the rights of all individuals are protected regardless of race, gender and sexual orientation and where gender equality is enshrined, it is still an incredibly patriarchal society. Women often have to confront paternalism and sexism on a daily basis, both at home and at work. Professional women, especially single women, who engage in previously "male" activities such as buying or fixing a car or house, bringing them into contact and negotiation with male mechanics, car dealers, builders and estate agents, have to suffer the paternalism of these men, and when they challenge these archaic social practices are considered rather ungrateful and even offensive. The paternalism that still characterises the Cape reaches back to the brutal paternalistic relationship between Dutch settlers and slaves followed by the equally patriarchal rule of a paternal British society, both of which instituted for the slaves' descendants the cult of a powerful white male figure in whom their fate resided. These patriarchal and paternalistic notions were replicated in each family and social organisation, including the Christmas bands, whose members pay huge respect and deference to their "founding fathers."[14] The Christmas bands had been male-only organisations in male-dominated communities for many decades, so the implications for notions of masculinity are significant. For the community of Christmas bands and supporters, this includes not only being responsible and respectful husbands and fathers, but also undergoing extreme endurance; being able to cope with marching and blowing an instrument for long periods, and staying awake and performing through Christmas Eve into Christmas morning without fading.

Pride in masculinity was revealed to me on my first Christmas Eve road march with St Joseph's on 24–25 December 2003 when the "tiny tots", who had fallen asleep on the seats of the bus while the rest of the band members were marching in the streets and visiting families in their homes, were noisily woken up at the end of the road march by some of the older men, who told them in no uncertain terms that

if they wanted to go out with the grown men they had to keep up with them. This seemed unnecessarily harsh to me and I wanted to tell the men to be gentler with the little ones. I soon realised that there was a mixture of seriousness and playfulness in these actions: part of what they revealed was a sense of initiation into the ritual of the occasion, into what it meant to be a member of the Christmas band.

This was confirmed in conversations and interviews I had with band members who stressed the significance of endurance: "In the earlier years… we'd go out on Christmas Eve and come home at nine o' clock in the morning, then at three o' clock in the afternoon we'd go out again. These youngsters today, they can't stand it" (HS 07/25/01); "In the old days we walked all over, there were no buses. We were much stronger than these guys today" (AS 07/30/04); "I played so much that my lips hurt and my lungs felt like they would explode" (WW 06/26/05); or "*Toe ek nog jonk was het ek gestap dat die stof so staan!*" ["When I was much younger, I walked so vigorously that I raised a cloud of dust"] (HS 05/16/05). Much as in organised sport, masculine qualities such as endurance, strength and a competitive spirit are clearly valued and celebrated in this cultural practice. It is, of course, related to the sense of militarism that underpins much of what happens. The masculine pride associated with this physical aspect of Christmas band practice is interesting as a point of comparison with when women were included as performance members in the mid-1990s. I focus on women's roles in Chapter 6.

Military influence

It is the incorporation of military gestures that most dignifies the men and, by extension, the male community and expresses their masculinity. The militaristic aspects of the competitions exhibited most prominently in the "grand march past" by strict marching files and the characteristic behaviour of the *voorloper* – as shown above – are particularly striking and lead one to question why this community adopted them and when or how they emerged. The enduring effect of the British military on the imaginations of East African peoples and their musical arts, in particular, is well documented (see for example Ranger 1975 or Gunderson and Barz 2000); that it has had a similar impact on the cultures in the southernmost part of Africa where colonisation lasted much longer, is not surprising. Lara Allen (2005) has shown, for example, the influence of the Scottish regiments of the late 1930s and 1940s on certain forms of emerging black urban popular culture in South Africa, notably *kwela*. In the case of Christmas bands, it is significant that communities who seem to operate in ways that are the antithesis of a disciplined military culture so eagerly adopt the accoutrements of the military within this cultural form.

In a volume recording the social history of Cape Town, Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith (1998) have documented some of the earliest recruitments of the Khoekhoe[15] (1795) and the Malay[16] (1804) by the Dutch in attempts to stave off the British invasions of the Cape of Good Hope. Though limited, these recruitments were clearly significant displays of trust, approval and acceptance on the side of the settler authorities with whom these two groups had complicated relationships as either vilified (Khoekhoe) or enslaved (Malays). It was perhaps the British themselves with their more sophisticated and powerful army and navy that captured not only the imagination but more importantly the loyalty of the subjects. Volunteer forces to the British army were not uncommon, and the volunteers enjoyed the spectacle of the military review, which occurred regularly on the Grand Parade (the city square), where spectators came to watch the men preening themselves in their fashionable and expensive uniforms (Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998,197).

In addition, Anglican missionisation introduced certain core values of British society that correlated well with military culture, such as discipline, dress, basic literacy, and drill in an attempt to create a respectable poor (Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 186). Along with verbal literacy, the British also brought musical literacy in the form of reading tonic sol-fa notation in church and school choirs.[17] Many of these values were passed on through the Church Lads Brigades, Anglican "disciplinary practices" for boys (and men) in which many of the current older leadership of the Christmas Bands Movement participated (CS 07/19/01; AS 07/30/04; HS 05/16/05; CM 01/25/08; FdK 01/31/08). In the brigade structures of both the Anglican and Dutch Reformed Churches these men learned to march, drill, play wind instruments, and read music. I suggest that these core values of English society, in particular, were incorporated into the ethos of the Christmas bands. Discipline is essential in executing the parades in street marches over Christmas and the New Year, and especially in the competitions. Consequently, prior to competitions, they practise marching and drilling for long periods to ensure that everyone knows exactly what to do. They parade in uniforms that must be spotless and they require basic musical literacy to perform on the instruments accompanying the marches.

In former years, bands did not perform the drill at all as they do these days (BdW 03/30/07). According to Dennis Baartman (01/25/08), "Grand march [past] wasn't the issue because we were not so sophisticated as we are today. We didn't bother with, you know, right dress and whatever and stand at ease, stand [to] attention. No, you just fall in line and 'by the left quick march' and off you go." Initially, the Christmas bands marched only and did not drill until the mid-1960s when the "exhibition march" became competitive. Good Shepherd Christmas Band was the first to introduce military drilling, followed by the Young Guiding Stars. Then the "exhibition march" – the bands' grand entry march onto the field – was an adjudicated

category in all Christmas Bands Boards. This march became an important display of discipline and order within the bands. To ensure their excellent execution of this military practice, they even recruited the assistance of military personnel and church brigade instructors. Cedric Malado (01/25/08) suggests that the brigades do army-style drilling and anyone who is involved in the brigades can walk into a job in the army with a keen understanding of the drills, except for the rifle drill. Today, the SAUCBB does not adjudicate the "exhibition march" as a competitive category, because it is time consuming (DB 01/25/08), although the bands still enter spectacularly onto the field. Even where it has disappeared, however, drilling has remained a practice and bands do the drill just before the "best-dressed band" and "grand march past" categories.

Another influence on local culture was brass bands, also part of the culture of the military and found at some mission stations. During the South African War of 1899–1902, hundreds of men from the Cape Colony were employed in non-combatant auxiliaries as transport workers. Many of these "Cape Boys", as they were referred to,[18] came from Moravian and Rhenish Mission Stations in the Western Cape such as Wuppertal, Elim, Steinkopf, and Genadendal, amongst others, where they had learned to play brass instruments, and entertained each other in their leisure time with hymns and popular melodies (Nasson 1984, 41). "Cape Boys" also had a particular penchant for "ostentatious dress", which groups wore off duty as a way of identifying themselves in public. "Brightly-coloured slouch hats and black felt caps adorned with ostrich feathers, worn with kilts or white duck trousers, appear to have been *de rigueur*" (Nasson 1984, 40). Furthermore, during working hours, members of particular mission stations identified themselves by brightly coloured handkerchiefs or scarves (Nasson 1984, 40).

There is perhaps a precedent for this flamboyant dress in the carnavalesque street celebrations in the early Cape. As noted by Denis-Constant Martin, in 1886 the revellers were "going about in large bodies, dressed most fantastically" (*Cape Times* 1886 cited in Martin 1997, 5). By 1907 they were seen "with coat tails flying, prancing fantastically along the rattling of bones, the tum-tum of the drums, the banging of tambourines, and the strumming of banjo and guitar" (*Cape Times* 1907 cited in Martin 1997, 6). The penchant of the "Cape Boys" for flamboyant dress as a form of group identification and the playing of hymns and popular tunes were incorporated into the practice of the Christmas bands. On competition day, the stadium arena is enlivened by groups of males sporting brightly coloured dress designed not unlike stylish military or navy uniforms, minus the braiding and epaulets. The dress does incorporate an element of play, however, on its military origin.[19] Christmas band uniforms are colourful, not khaki or navy, and include hats adorned with coloured feathers and matching kerchiefs worn in lapel pockets. The jackets are often more

colourful than the trousers, and range from blue and green to maroon and purple, with a matching colourful shirt. These carnavalesque uniforms in fact parody even as they mimic militarism, localising and familiarising it for the community – even while retaining some of the gestures and disciplinary codes of the military. Parody, satire and irony are prevalent in working-class coloured cultural expressions in Cape Town and the Western Cape,[20] and are ways of responding to the daily social and economic impositions endured as culturally marginalised members of society.

In an interview with the then president of the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union, Mr Brian de Wet (03/30/07),[21] I explored the military relationship. His view was that (white) military males were approached to adjudicate the "best-dressed band" and "grand march past" categories because they were viewed as more impartial than coloureds, who had limited access to the military under apartheid. But, in fact, the Cape Corps, an essentially coloured military force, had been in existence in various forms over centuries (see Mostert 1992 and Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998), and many of these men joined the Christmas bands or advised them regarding the "grand march past" for competitions. Mr de Wet suggested that once the bands realised the expectations of the adjudicators from the military service, they began to change to a stricter military-style review of the uniforms and stricter marching style in the "grand march past". He placed the period of military involvement from the 1980s onwards, although newspaper reports suggest much earlier dates: the 1950s and 1960s ("Boy wins trophy outright" 1956; "Competition for bands" 1962 and 1964; "Diekie Loader presents band contest prizes" 1964), and Mr Hannes September corroborates this earlier involvement (HS4 01/19/07). Ironically, traces of the hierarchical structures of Cape slave society linger in some of the militarisms: deferential forms of address accompanied by salutes, and the emphasis on discipline, for example. These "rituals of deference and discipline" (Mason 2003, 63) have, however, clearly been subsumed into the paternalistic organisation and ethos of the Christmas bands. Fanon (1986, 142) perceived this link between militarism and paternity as a duality: "Militarization and the centralization of authority in a country automatically entail a resurgence of the authority of the father."

Besides the military, another aspect of British society acculturated into coloured society was city clubs (Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 239; see also Chapter 1), enthusiastically emulating the notion of acceptable masculine behaviour, especially among lower-class males. For many decades, therefore, Christmas bands, Malay choirs and the *klopse* all had a membership exclusive to males, and women participated in auxiliary activities only, such as providing food, making the clothing and fundraising, and later were gradually involved in fringe activities such as beauty pageants, carnival princesses and queens ("Women will 'invade' coon carnival for first time" 1969). Women were ardent in this role, only

becoming fully participant members from the mid-1990s, when the South African Constitution, which promotes gender equality and inclusiveness, could be used to bolster their arguments for inclusion. Nevertheless, the club aspect of the bands remains an integral aspect of cultural transmission. Not only do young boys and girls learn about their cultural practices here, but it is also in these clubs that they learn about their respective roles in society. These roles used to be extremely gendered, often conservative, and organisations were inherently patriarchal. Change is inevitable, however, and the unquestioned patriarchy is slowly being challenged, with women now being included within the organisational structures at all levels, including deputy-chairs, musical directors and captains.

Another well-documented influence on Cape culture is that of the touring blackface minstrel groups. Veit Erlmann (1991b, 1996, and 1999) has documented the profound effect this had on the South African population. In the United States, dress was an essential aspect of this cultural form, used to identify stock characters such as Jim Crow[22] and the dandy.[23] Later, as the cultural genre transformed through the involvement of African-Americans themselves, dress became an important marker for the display of male public behaviour (see Mahar 1999). Similarly, in the Western Cape of South Africa, for the cultural genres on which minstrelsy had an enduring effect, dress is still such an important element that it is adjudicated as a competition category in all three cultural organisations: Christmas bands, Malay choirs, and the *klopse*. While Christmas bands and Malay choirs dress very stylishly in suits or sports jackets and trousers, the *klopse's* dress is more satirical, resembling pyjamas with its colourful satin prints. Certainly, for the Christmas bands, the "best-dressed band" category is probably second in importance only to the "solo" category for the senior squad, so that when the adjudicators' reports find them less than spotless and refer to untidiness, it is not only reflective of the individual members, but the men criticise themselves as "children who can't even take care of their uniforms!"[24] This outburst also has the effect of internalising their historical infantilisation. Nonetheless, military routines, stylised male behaviour and neat stylish uniforms are elements integral to the competitions.

Martin (1999) suggests that the uniforms adopted by the parading traditions of the Western Cape can be viewed as masks. In his article "Politics behind the Mask" (2001, 11–12) he contends that a mask can be "any decorative device which allows the individual to change his or her appearance… behind the mask a reveller can be at the same time him/herself and another with whom he [sic] identifies." There seems to be a clear identification with the military in the strict routines, drilling and discipline practised in the Christmas bands. In fact, those who do not play instruments and march only are referred to as soldiers. These "soldiers" therefore identify with the military through their deportment, the gestures of the *voorlopers* and

their neat, stylish uniforms. The concept of soldiers is quite ambiguous here, though, as it not only implies the connection to the military but also refers to the concept of Christian musical ministry embedded within the practice. Thus, they are also soldiers of God, doing (His) good work in their communities. By wearing the uniform, they transform themselves into upright and honourable soldiers (or children) of God. The uniforms are not cheap; for certain members it may be the one luxury they afford themselves every year, or every other year, as the case may be. When they enter the more depressed communities on their road marches, their admirable presentation of themselves is almost enviable. The transformation the uniform engenders may be a reason why there is such a strict code of ethics around the wearing of it.

Christmas band competitions and the local-global contexts

As I have shown, Christmas band competitions are spectacular community events that have remained locally contextualised and the competitors have shown little interest in extending this phenomenon beyond their immediate community. Drawing on Lara Allen's argument about the "dialectical power reversals that characterise cultural production" in *kwela* (2005, 32), I apply her model of the four phases of local-global cultural production – attraction, imitation, indigenisation, recognition – to the case of the Christmas bands. The attraction to and fascination with foreign (global) cultural artefacts, Allen says, undergo a transformation through the process of (local) indigenisation, and the new artefact is given recognition through its desirability to an-other (Allen 2005, 32).[25] I suggest that the practice of the Christmas bands has incorporated the first two phases in this four-phase circuit of production – attraction and imitation – but has not completed it; in fact, as a practice, it sits almost uncomfortably (maybe triumphantly) between the second and third phases. It strives for an imitation that is recognisable on a "global" level but in the local practice of indigenisation, global performance norms are constantly subverted: by wide vibrato, intonational variances, the timbre of local instruments, the way uniforms are parodied, and so forth. The fact that this practice has not undergone the fourth phase – recognition through its desirability to an-other – is partly indicated in the response from an "other" (distinguished overseas) keynote speaker at a South African Musicological conference in 2005, who was "under-whelmed" by the St Joseph's band's performance at the conference.[26] The students studying classical and jazz music degrees at the SACM to whom I teach an introductory Worlds of Music course express a similar stance: they focus on the "typical inaccuracies" of the performance practice.

Despite the aspirations of some band directors to change their techniques to the point where a member might perform with a standard symphony orchestra (certainly an-other for this community) some day, it is not their intention to sound like a typical Western wind band. That the bands remain hovering around Allen's third phase, indigenisation, without going "beyond" it, might be why the practice has received little media or scholarly attention: not only has it not reached a certain level of public recognition, it has never actually seemed to need it. In the South African context, it is similar to, while remaining a poor imitation of, a dominant European (white) culture. Never gaining the status of a Creole practice such as New Orleans street music, and on the other hand not as acceptable vocally, yet still exotic musically as local Malay choral practice is, it has not seemed to be worthy of anthropological documentation. Nor has it striven for "another's desire" through tourism as the Minstrel Carnival has. It has remained a somewhat localised practice in the Western Cape.[27]

Younger people in the community do seem to be showing a "desire" to see the Christmas bands represented on national television, desiring the recognition the bands do not necessarily see, or want. Mr Charles Sprinkle mentioned how the youngsters told him: "It seems they [the media] don't recognise us" (CS 07/19/01). If this desire for recognition, for "another's desire", is pursued by the younger generation, how will this change the current nature, operational methods and, more especially, the sound of the Christmas bands in the future?

The spectacular nature of competitions

The spectacular nature of competitions, however circumscribed they may be within a circuit of recognition that does not go beyond the local, bonds local communities of supporters and constitutes a performance of identity – an annual enactment of an ideal coloured community comprising upright and honourable members of society. While notions of respectability are evident in their dress and deportment, the use of spectacle, wittingly or unwittingly, is awe-inspiring. The very nature and intent of competitions almost guarantee that everyone does his or her best on the day. The lure of winning trophies and being the envy of most bands seems to be the overriding factor at competitions, although the bands are constantly reminded of their Christian ethics and duties.

John MacAloon (1984, 243) suggested that spectacles have a certain size and grandeur. Nevertheless, it is the emphasis on the visual and sensory as well as the symbolic importance of such events that make Christmas band activities, both the street parades and competitions, spectacular, not their size or scale compared with for instance, the Minstrel Carnival or other carnivals around the world. It is the transformation of the everyday into the extraordinary, and the raising of expectation for spectacle, that counts.

In his article entitled "The anthropology of theatre and spectacle," Beeman (1993, 380) suggests:

> The meaningfulness of a spectacle is usually proportionate to the degree to which the elements displayed to the public seem to represent key elements in the public's cultural and emotional life. It is almost as if the mere event of displaying these symbolic representative elements in a special framed context is enough to elicit strong positive emotional responses from the observing public.

In the few years in which I have researched the Christmas bands, it has become quite obvious to me that they represent something larger than themselves. There are often emotional displays at their events, which are brought on purely by observing them and not necessarily by the fraught competitions. Although the coloured community is far from being a homogeneous one, this expressive practice is certainly perceived to be representative of the lower-class Christian community. The coloured community in Cape Town, both middle and working classes, has experienced untold misery through the apartheid government's notorious Group Areas Act of 1956, which forcibly removed and relocated vibrant communities from places close to the city and their places of work. This social upheaval disrupted some bands for a few years, but surprisingly not many of the members that I interviewed recall the upheaval, although the names of a few existing bands, such as Bloemhof[28] Crusaders, names of bands that are no longer in existence, as in Newlands Independent Christmas Band, or former names of extant bands, suggest those places from which they were uprooted. Other interviewees have an air of resignation when asked about this historical blight.

I want to suggest that the memory of these difficult times for these communities is embodied in the Christmas bands. The spirited way in which they perform the hymns and Christmas carols is reminiscent of the vibrant communities in which people once lived, where they knew their neighbours and where they felt safe and happy. The townships to which they were relocated are gang and drug infested, and the work of the Christmas bands as musical ministry is much harder in these contexts. As Homi Bhabha (1994, 63) suggests in his trenchant chapter, "Interrogating Identity: Franz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative", "Remembering Fanon is a process of intense discovery and disorientation. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present." In the same sense this "re-membering" of their own "dismembered past" in moments of cultural embodiment is a painful, traumatic experience for members of this displaced community. In his work on social dramas, Victor Turner (1969) suggests that social dramas involved a break with reality allowing individuals to enter liminal transitory states and these individuals were later reincorporated into a reconstituted order. Furthermore, drawing on the work of Handelman, Beeman (1993) suggests that

public events such as spectacles reconstitute the whole community by means of their structure and enactment. Using these analyses of spectacle, I contend that the public events of the Christmas bands reconstitute these lower-class Christian communities, bringing them together in a very special way that transcends temporal boundaries and reaches back beyond apartheid-era traumas. In consequence, the responses to these events are often tear-filled and emotional.

Schechner (2005, 87) suggests that in modern societies competitions take the place of ritual. I would rather say that competition contexts are special spaces for extraordinary experience, such as intense bonding among band members and between bands and their audiences, approaching what Turner (1969) referred to as *communitas*. Through the spectacle of Christmas bands' competitions people find meaning in their lives. Their dashing suits, upright deportment and military-like marches enact a dignity and respectability denied them by their former oppressors and their still current social and cultural marginalisation.

Conclusions

Cultural events such as Christmas band competitions provide the practitioners with a means of dynamically preserving their cultural practices through annual performances. Christmas band competitions foster community pride and community building in what this particular community perceives as an absence of neighbourhood and national cohesion. The stylish uniforms, strict discipline and implied militarism in the marching files, and the way that the *voorloper* interacts with the adjudicators in the "best dressed band" and "grand march past" categories suggest the enactment of an ideal community. Just as *lifela* poets inscribe an ideal human as an invincible miner in their poetry of self-praise (see Coplan 1994), the Christmas band performers and, by extension, their community of supporters, present themselves as upright, honourable, dashing and disciplined members of society. This kind of idealisation is what Charles Keil and Steven Feld refer to as the "participatory power of music" in *Music grooves* (2005, 20): "Music is our last and best source of participatory consciousness, and it has this capacity not just to model but maybe to enact some ideal communities."

With the decline of gatherings and outings such as picnics, which formerly kept the community focus, Christmas band parades and competitions fulfil the need for community maintenance and solidarity. As such, the competitions have become the significant *raison d'être* of the Christmas bands; most of the membership is active during the summer months (including Christmas and New Year) and the numbers trail off significantly after the competitions in April. These practices are unique to the lower-class coloured Christian community, and may be seen as an articulation and performance of a particular social identity, which, though marginalised and

contested, is nonetheless proudly independent and united. Certain sectors of the coloured community have historically grappled with their marginalised location within the national political landscape. Through expressive practices such as the Christmas bands, with their emphases on discipline, order and respectability, they are able to imbue notions of citizenship and nationhood with an ethos and moral aesthetics.

Notes

1 Parts of this chapter have been published in Bruinders 2006, 2007 and 2013.

2 Personal communication with Valmont Layne. See note 1, Chapter 2.

3 Like the opening of Chapter 1, this section is written in the ethnographic present, despite the implications and criticisms levelled against its usage (see Fabian 1983; Davis 1992; Hastrup 1992; and Cottrell 2004 for deliberations on this issue). I engage it here to capture the mood and excitement, hopes and fears of the participants on this important day in the bands' annual calendar.

4 Worcester is a town about 160 km outside Cape Town.

5 Since we are late, the band has to pay a minimal fine for entering the stadium after proceedings have started.

6 A long slender conical plastic trumpet, with a particularly rasping sound, commonly used at sports events, especially soccer matches. The *vuvuzela* turned out to be quite contentious during the FIFA Confederations Cup and World Cup Soccer events held in South Africa in 2009 and 2010, respectively.

7 These could include a special anniversary of a band or birthday of a member, especially of senior members.

8 There is no junior solo in the board competitions; only the senior solo is adjudicated.

9 One of the restrictions imposed on bands is that their members always remain together on the field and do not join their families or friends on the stands, so that they are available to compete when the band is called upon to do so and to maintain unity and solidarity, which the leadership hope will enhance their chances of winning.

10 The bands prepared three solo pieces: prescribed junior and senior solos, which were both instrumental pieces, and an own choice senior solo.

11 This concern was expressed pragmatically by a young Lutheran *kwaya* director interviewed by Gregory Barz (2003, 31) about the performance of German versus African hymns and who was making a concerted effort to use Tanzanian songs: "If you get used to using books you can become adversely affected, you will become stagnant."

12 This only happened in 2004 when South Africa experienced its third democratic elections. It was largely a ploy of the ANC to court the votes of people in the Western Cape, whose voting habits were notoriously conservative. Although the minister was greeted with resounding applause, the ordinary members of the Christmas bands were

quite sceptical of his presence, commenting on the fact that the politicians are only seen at these community events during election years.

13 In 2001, St Joseph's was asked to be part of a city celebration in which the Christmas lights were "switched on" and some of the local cultural practices were showcased and televised. They spent an entire day at this event, parading and performing well-rehearsed pieces, and assumed that they would get much mileage out of a television appearance. However, they were quite disappointed at their rather peripheral appearance (only a few seconds and as a backdrop to a speech) and decided that they had no need to be involved in such events in the future.

14 The most senior member and founder of the St Joseph's Christmas Band is referred to as the band father; his wife, until her death, was also the band mother. I related in Chapter 4 how a member who had very little musical training referred to the bandmaster as "daddy" because, as he explained to me, he respected him so much for his musical proficiency and expert guidance. Also, the more senior and long-standing members are honoured as life members and enjoy certain privileges.

15 Autochthonous people of the southwestern Cape of South Africa. (See Chapter 1, note 6).

16 Descendants of Southeast Asian slaves brought to the Cape of Good Hope soon after the Dutch arrived in 1652. The trade-off for the recruitment of the Malays, who were Muslims, into a special artillery unit to defend the Cape against the British invasion, was the granting of religious freedom and land for a Muslim cemetery on the slopes of Signal Hill by the Dutch (Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 126).

17 In his deliberations on the importance of the hymn as cultural literacy in colonial East Africa, Barz (2003, 49) quotes Richard Gray (1990, 95) stating that "many Protestant missions even insisted that the acquisition of literacy was a prerequisite for baptism."

18 Another manifestation of the paternalism and infantilisation inherent in society at the time.

19 I am indebted to Brett Pyper for first pointing out the element of play to me.

20 The most prominent examples are the *moppies* (comic songs), which poke fun at the hardships of everyday life, sung by both the Malay choirs and the *klopse*.

21 Mr de Wet is himself a military man, a Warrant Officer in the Air Force, although non-combatant. He joined the army during apartheid when blacks were not allowed to carry weapons for fear of turning on their oppressors (the enemy within).

22 The poor raggedly dressed plantation slave.

23 An aspirant young black male who wore flashy dress, which included top hat, tails, a tight pair of trousers and a walking stick.

24 Mr Cecil Tookley angrily burst out with these words at the competitions one year.

25 Allen uses Jacques Lacan's concept of desire: "desire is not ultimately for another, but for another's desire" (2005, 32).

26 Personal communication with Gary Tomlinson, musicologist and international keynote speaker at the conference.

27 It still surprises me how many South Africans, even Capetonians, to whom I speak about this topic tell me that they have never heard of this cultural phenomenon.

28 The name of an apartment block in District Six from which working-class Capetonians were forcibly removed.

6

Hidden subjectivities: Women's involvement in the Christmas bands

Historically, the general perception has been that the Christmas Bands Movement was an expressive practice that consisted exclusively of males and only in recent times (1990s) included women as fully participant members. Upon further research, however, I found that women's involvement in the Christmas bands is more complex and nuanced than this generally held perception. Not only were women the pillars of the individual bands through their unwavering support of and involvement in the bands' activities; in a few cases, they even marched along with or in place of the men. Women are challenging the former gendered identity of the bands, even though their subjectivity in various leadership positions is sometimes undermined by male ambivalence towards them.

Before exploring the transformation of the Christmas bands since the 1990s, I locate the women of this community within the larger South African sociopolitical context of national transition, 1990–1994, particularly with regard to gender transformation. This period was characterised by openness and a restructuring of the social fabric that was expediently acknowledged and exploited by the women in the Christmas bands. The significance of this period was that a window of opportunity for women was opened in an extremely patriarchal society.

Gendered scholarship

It has become common practice in academic scholarship to rectify the underlying assumption of past scholarship that male experience was representative of everyone in society. Through their work, anthropologists such as Abu-Lughod (1987 and 1992), Kondo (1990), Wolf (1992) and Behar (1993) amongst others have over the past two to three decades, made concerted efforts to challenge and redress these misleading

assumptions. The prevalent academic practice of privileging male experience in South African historical writing has marginalised South African women's opinions and existence. Within already marginalised groups of people, such as black communities in South Africa, the effects on women are even more devastating. South African scholarship since the 1990s has acknowledged this situation through the pursuit of gender-based research, self-consciously recognising this shortcoming.[1]

The privileging of male experience was duplicated in all spheres of social life. Males almost exclusively participated in domains such as politics, sports and the city clubs that, in the case of the coloured community, covered a range of cultural activities. Men generally took leadership positions in most activities outside of the domicile. Women's positions in many of these activities were either totally absent or supportive, relegated to subsidiary activities that focused on the "natural" roles of women in society – caring and nurturing – and thus coincided with women's roles in the domicile. However, women were agents of their own destinies and often became involved in social welfare organisations or in church activities that provided them with an outlet in which to be socially involved (see Villa-Vicencio 1995 and Jorritsma 2008). Middle-class women,[2] who had access to more resources and cultural capital, were often in charge of such organisations and lived fairly fulfilled and productive lives as social advocates in addition to working as professionals along with being wives and mothers.

Advance of the women's sector

It is a well-known fact that South Africa is still an extremely patriarchal society, partly due to the isolation of and extreme censorship within the country during the apartheid years when ideas and movements that occurred in cosmopolitan societies elsewhere were not allowed to flourish. One example is the women's movement and radical feminism of the 1960s and 1970s that took root particularly in Euro-American societies. Despite the growing political consciousness of South African women in the latter half of the twentieth century and the immense strides made by women in the anti-apartheid movement, this movement (and the men involved) remained rather conservative and patriarchal (even sexist) concerning the subjectivities of women (see Fester 2005 and Govender 2007).

After the political parties and leaders were unbanned in February 1990, and with the expected change in government in South Africa, possibilities opened up for marginalised groups to confront the former violation of their human rights and dignity as well as other problems and deficiencies they experienced daily. In this regard, the transitional phase, 1990–1994, was a particularly productive space for South African women, whose organisations joined forces to establish the Women's

National Coalition (WNC) during the run-up to the first democratic elections in 1994. The coalition effectively highlighted women's issues during the transitional period, principally ensuring that gender equity and women's rights were enshrined in the new constitution established in 1995 (Foundation for Human Rights [FHR] 2009).

The Women's National Coalition was important for putting women's issues on the national agenda during the momentous time of transformation. Significantly, state structures were established, such as the National Machinery for Women and the Commission for Gender Equality (1994), to inform the new constitution (1995) and promote and monitor gender equality (McEwan 2001, 49 and Gouws 2005, 71). However, the coalition was short-lived, and there has admittedly been a lack of lobbying and advocacy by women's organisations since, which is a cause for great concern. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that currently "women's organisations are service delivery oriented, focusing on issues of immediate relevance to women's daily lives, such as domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and employment creation" (FHR 2009, 9).

The FHR commissioned a study in 2009 to evaluate organisations involved in addressing women's issues in South Africa post 1994. The report (FHR 2009, 13) revealed that the major challenges facing women's organisations were women's socioeconomic vulnerability, poverty, patriarchy and a failure to engage effectively with government, particularly at the local level. Another problem that emerged was the lack of a clear programme for the women's sector, which meant that external parties such as government or donors set the agenda by deciding what they chose to fund. Furthermore, problems of women's exploitation, discrimination and abuse were not necessarily prioritised for structural transformation in a climate of enormous racial problems. Despite a comprehensive legislative framework for improving women's rights and achieving gender equity, and notwithstanding women's greater visibility in government – 42.4% in parliament and 35.2% in local government ("Women in national parliaments" 2016), most South African women still do not fully enjoy these rights.[3] This disparity is sometimes due to the fact that the justice system has not necessarily been overhauled and certain acts relating to women's abuse have not changed since they were implemented by the apartheid, all-white, all-male government ("Zuma case reveals SA rape problem" 2006). While there are policies in place to support women, the political will for implementation seems to be lacking. A glaring example is the lack of implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 due to budgetary constraints, and the consequent rise in woman and child abuse (Fester 2005, 214).[4] Besides, there is a general perception that the women's sector has weakened considerably since democracy.

Some prominent male politicians have exacerbated the slow recognition of the new status of women through their own behaviour towards women and their remarks

concerning issues of gender, thereby contributing towards the regression of gender issues in the country. A highly visible example of this regression was what occurred during the rape trial of Jacob Zuma (February–May 2006), before he became President of the country, in which the women of the ANC came out in full support of Zuma with placards suggesting that instead, "Jacob Zuma was raped" ("Crowds stand by Zuma in rape case" 2006). Further suggestions of political conspiracy can be read in the following:"How much did they pay you, *nondindwa* [bitch]?" along with the vituperative "Burn this bitch!" (Evans and Wolmarans 2006). Hundreds of Zuma supporters rallied outside the court, singing his praises and burning images of the victim (Gifford 2010). The clashes at the court between the large numbers of Zuma supporters and a small group of feminist supporters of the rape victim were so intense that she was forced to leave the country. In fact, she lived in hiding for three months after the charges were laid due to the overwhelming support for Zuma ("Crowds stand by Zuma in rape case" 2006). This was a woman whose father, when alive, had been a good friend of Zuma's and she had come to his home[5] to seek his advice. Significantly, Das (2008, 291–292) suggests that since women are "implicitly treated as the property of men," rape is defined "not as a violation against the woman's bodily integrity but as an offense against the property rights of the man who is her guardian." Furthermore, she suggests that the legal system in fact "functions to authorise male violence towards women" and that "categories of caste, class, and race have a serious impact on the legal decisions of rape" (Das 2008, 291). In this particular case, the victim had no male guardian whom the legal system needed to honour.

Nevertheless, this tremendous support for Zuma is typical of the denialism that characterises South African society on serious issues such as woman and child abuse and HIV/AIDS (see Du Toit 2005; Mangcu 2008; and Kadalie 2009). These actions are symptomatic of a disregard for human life (children's and women's lives) as well as a lack of feminism driving certain women's organisations, such as the ANC Women's League, and the acquiescence to patriarchal social relations still markedly present in society. In a recent publication, the authors suggest that the valorisation of an African masculinity by the president of the ANC (Jacob Zuma) and the former president of the ANC youth league (Julius Malema), has had a discursive backlash on gender relations in society (see Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger 2012).

Despite all this, women *are* gradually becoming more aware of their rights and certain middle-class women are more recognised and empowered than before. However, the FHR report asserts that without a feminist agenda that challenges patriarchal privilege, the women's sector may not achieve the goal of eradicating existing structural relations (FHR 2009, *passim*). Notwithstanding attempts at empowering certain women in government and business, without a groundswell of women's empowerment these attempts remain token gestures nationally. The unequal

structural relations are so ingrained that a far more radical and widespread agenda is needed. Paradoxically, even though the ANC government has advocated gender equity, women in government have not necessarily effected gender transformation within the government or society. Kadalie (2009, 93) suggests that this fact "exemplifies how powerful the party list system is in silencing women. That is exactly what is wrong with the word empowerment in government circles. Those with power – usually male rulers – confer power on women who are seen to be compliant and beholden to the piper that calls the tune."[6]

Notwithstanding the progressive political changes that have occurred since 1994, serious problems regarding women abound, with South Africa having the highest statistics of sexual violence towards women in the world.[7] With this entrenched patriarchy and paternalism, it seems that South Africa needs another major political upsurge to overcome historically produced notions regarding women's subjectivities.[8]

Nevertheless, there are organisations across the social spectrum in which women are involved and although not overtly focused "on empowering women or challenging existing power relations between women and men," women in these organisations are able "to mobilize around more strategic issues" (FHR 2009, 95). The example of women in the Christmas Bands Movement may not be much of a groundswell but it does articulate some changes of attitude in the coloured community of Cape Town – by women and, to a lesser extent, by men.[9]

Women in the Christmas Bands Movement

In my participation with the Christmas bands, I came across a range of women variously involved in the bands. Even though my initial understanding was that the bands were historically male spheres – male organisers and male participants – and that women had only slowly been encroaching on that space since the political reforms initiated in the 1990s, I came to realise that the women were often the backbone of the organisations, playing crucial "behind-the-scenes" roles or, as one of the male interviewees called them, "the backstage team" (KM 08/08/04). They often proved to be the threads that held the band together, woven into – indeed creating – the warp and weft of the organisation. To invoke Scott (1990) here, the "public transcript" of the Christmas Bands Movement was that it was an all-male expressive practice, whereas the "hidden transcript" revealed an integral involvement of the female supporters of the bands upon whom the men were quite dependent in order to fulfil their obligations as band members. The women were particularly significant for sustaining the bands through organising fundraising and other fun activities during the year when there were no competitions to keep the membership committed (AS 07/18/06). In fact, the males who were known to be the "fathers" of the band often

spoke lovingly and proudly of their wives as the "mothers" of the band, attesting to the significant role that these women played and without whom the bands could not have been successful (CS 07/19/01; HS 07/25/01 and HS 05/26/06).[10]

How did this work? These women, the mothers and wives of the band members, fed the men at long rehearsals and on competition days, saw that their uniforms were spotless, and took care of their belongings at the stadiums while cheering for them unfailingly, keeping their spirits high and competitive. They also supported them on the road marches, prepared the bountiful *tafels,* and attended their rehearsals, silently observing and approving when things went well. They were, in other words, the pillars sustaining each of the bands, buttressing the men like symbolic platforms from which the men could shine. Here again the notion of the offstage, hidden transcript of the women's integral support engaging with the official or public transcript becomes apparent. No wonder the women were so jubilant and felt such pride when the men did well at competitions. It was as if they themselves had won the trophies as they played such central roles in all the preparations. Incidentally, they also kept their families together and reared the children almost single-handedly over the summer months, as the men were so involved in the bands' activities and often away from home for many hours. This applied especially to the women married to musicians who performed in various local musical formats that were particularly engaged over the festive season, such as the Malay choirs, *klopse* and *langarm* (social dance) bands.

Women worked consistently to raise funds to help cover uniform, instrument and other costs for the men. These labour-intensive activities included events such as games evenings, ballroom dancing, *karaoke* and musical evenings that involved selling of tickets, food preparation, and preparing and cleaning the halls before and after the events (CS+ 04/04/08; RK 07/28/08; SB 08/04/08; ST 08/12/08). In interviews with the chair (Anthony Tockley) and life president (Hannes September) of the St Joseph's Christmas Band (hereafter St Joseph's), they mentioned how in former years many mothers and wives who were housewives worked tirelessly for the band in such activities. Nevertheless, although women were centrally involved, working alongside the men, they were not allowed to be fully participant official "members" or to wear the bands' uniforms. The uniform was perceived as quite prestigious; only "deserving" males who participated in the bands' performance activities, marching and playing instruments, were allowed this privilege. This perception was corroborated in several interviews (HS 07/25/01; SB 08/04/08; DM 08/07/08; ST 08/12/08).

From the inception of the bands, women had played the supportive role, but this was so extensive that it was effectively a major underpinning. The general perception of Christmas bands as male-only organisations visibly ended in the 1990s when women entered the bands as performers. There does not seem to be a definite decision, time or year when this happened. Each band seems to have included women in an

individual manner; furthermore, as I dug deeper into this area of research, I came across women who were part of the marching band and who wore the prestigious uniform well before the years of national transition. In a very general sense, during the 1990s, women's inclusion often started with girls and young women marching in formation alongside the men. In the case of Palm Crusaders Christmas Band, executive member Sheena Baron claimed in a telephonic interview that she had been involved in the band for 30 years. Even though she had already been a registered member back then, women only formally became part of the band in 1990, when they were allowed to be in uniform, to be on the field at competitions, and to participate in the structures of the band (SB 08/04/08). Perseverance Christmas Band allowed "the first girls to join [as] 'juniors' in 1996" (DM 08/07/08).

Once the females learned how to play wind instruments and to perform the specialised movements of the *voorloper*, they became more engaged as genuine performance members. Some older women's involvement extended to participation in various positions on the executive structures of the bands as well as within the federal structures (unions and boards). This often developed directly out of their former roles as excellent fundraising organisers and other supportive activities (SdK 01/29/08).

My own position as a woman and performance member of St Joseph's on my first road march seemed a curiosity and a fairly radical new move, as far as the women of St Joseph's were concerned. On my first house visitation with the band (24 December 2003), women showed surprise that there was "*nogal 'n vroumens!*" ("actually a woman!") parading with the band. Evidently, the fact that St Joseph's had allowed a female performer into its ranks was fast becoming an issue amongst its female supporters. Women who had been the bedrock of the organisation told me how jealous they were of me that I had joined the band and wore the uniform. I got the distinct feeling that wearing the band's uniform was the main issue at stake. I softened their envy by saying that I could participate because I was studying the band or because I played an instrument, and suggested that they too learn to play, for then they might not be refused membership. Some of them mentioned that in the past they had wanted to learn to play instruments and join the band but had been refused this privilege. At the time, I was vaguely aware that some bands had female membership but St Joseph's had not quite gone that route; their female membership was rather selective – the secretary, Sharon Tockley, and I were the only female members. Sharon Tockley was experiencing a short hiatus from the band during my first few months, so I was in effect the only female in the band at the time. As I was very new to the band, I did not want to pursue this issue any further.

In fact, on joining the band, I came across a certain reluctance to accept me. At the meeting where this happened (at which only men were present), I asked if their

reluctance was because I was a woman. The chairperson, Mr Esau, assured me that this was not the problem, and that in fact they had a female member who was the secretary. He presented other "obstacles" as to why my joining was problematic at that stage, which included the fact that I would not be able to participate in the competitions since the names of registered members had already been submitted to the union. Despite the lack of women in the band, or the apparent intransigence of the executive and older men on this matter (which I discuss later), the musical director introduced me to members of other bands with considerable pride as a woman who was a musician too! This happened the first time I participated in a SAUCBB activity in the centre of Cape Town. I noticed then that there were a few young women playing in other bands. At the band's first visitation to my house, Chris Peterson, the captain, addressed the gathering and announced, "I know that 2004 will be a great year for St Joseph's, as it is the first year that there is a woman in the [musical] band, so we are expecting great things this year!"

On the road marches during the 2004–2005 season, some of the women approached me again about the matter of females joining the band. I suggested they approach the band about sending their daughters to the band to be taught to play instruments and thus join the band. I made this suggestion because through my participation in the board competitions, particularly, I became aware that girls and women were accepted as performers. A mother who was keen to have her daughter participate in the band took up my suggestion and addressed this at the *tafel* in Steenberg. Mr Hannes September gave a very wise answer: such a serious matter could not be addressed in that informal forum. The band executive as well as the entire membership needed to consider it, so a response would be forthcoming later.

At a previous AGM in 2004 when the matter was raised, the older members regarded the issue of female membership as bringing trouble into the band. They had heard that once the girls became teenagers and found boyfriends outside of the band, they were no longer interested; their boyfriends influenced them to leave the band and the time and effort invested in them was lost. This gendered reading of the situation is interesting: surely they lost boys in the same manner? Yet that did not stop them from recruiting boys for the band. How did they cope with that loss?[11]

Some of the younger members of St Joseph's recognised that the memberships of bands with a female presence swelled tremendously. This was regarded positively and seen by Kenny Jooste as "the future of the bands". Mr Hannes September referred to the important roles of the two women who *were* in the band (as far as he was concerned) – the secretary and the assistant musical director. He suggested that they should only accept female members into the band under those limited conditions. It was suggested that the executive in their next meeting take a final decision on the matter. The executive decided that females could join the band only if they were

Figure 15 Perseverance Christmas Band's "junior" "grand march past" showing the girls in the squad.

already instrumentalists and owned their own instruments. This exclusive view was accepted by the general membership, knowing that this condition was virtually impossible for the women, and the matter was regarded as having been finalised.[12]

At the 2005 AGM this matter was addressed again. The bandmaster, Wallace Witbooi, who had previously endorsed the conservative views expressed, initiated the discussion by saying that the membership should revisit the decision of the executive. He said that at the previous board competition he had watched the girls in other bands, noticing how disciplined they were. He had heard that they were often more committed than the boys and, besides, they wore the male uniform (slacks and jacket, rather than a skirt, as some older women did) and looked very smart. He also claimed that the young girls did extremely well as drum majors, where sometimes the boys did not want to perform those stylised movements. This provoked heated debate. Some men took the stance that we were living in a new South Africa, and raised

the matter of freedom of choice, arguing that their female relatives and friends were being denied this freedom.

The bandmaster argued that accepting females into the band would build it, and that the women could play instruments such as the flute and clarinet that the men did not really want to play, thereby providing much-needed instrumental variety.[13] Finally, Peter Noble contended that the band's constitution did not preclude females from its membership; besides, such exclusion was against the country's constitution and thus unconstitutional on both counts. Although the deliberations were tense, the atmosphere in the meeting was quite different from the discussion in the previous year when the feeling of negativity lay heavily in the air. This time there was a tangible optimism. Many men expressed their views and others listened more carefully than before. Finally, the decision came; after a general vote the ruling was that the band would be opened to female membership.

The only two women present, the secretary and I, did not voice any opinion on the matter. I was silent, as I did not feel it was my place to influence any decision and understood that with my exceptional position in the band, my opinions might sway the decision. In an interview with Sharon Tockley, I asked her what she thought of women joining the band:

SB: And how did you feel about other women entering the band? Were you *for* the decision because there were quite a lot of deliberations, you know, it came up a few times in the meetings.

ST: This may be a difficult question and difficult to answer. I can answer it but – okay, I, in the beginning it was a bit strange because you know women ain't all the same and men ain't all the same. I just thought to myself getting women in the band, how will it turn out to be? Will things be the same? Things always change when different people come on board. And when they decided, give it a go, I thought to myself well, if that's the way they want it then that's… but Mr September was never happy having women in the band. But he also said… be it as it may, give it a go. (ST 08/12/08)

It is difficult to gauge from this excerpt how Sharon Tockley really felt, although she does not exude enthusiasm for the idea of female membership. One reason for this may be that St Joseph's was not very successful at recruiting females. A few young women and girls were recruited (since June 2005) but none of the older women who expressed envy when they saw me the first time were enticed to join. Sharon Tockley was recruited into the band as secretary in 2001 (see her biography in Chapter 3).

The inclusion of females has not essentially changed the band or her position of being saddled with the day-to-day organising around the band's activities, as she asserted later:

SB: And in your capacity as a member, executive member, you're the only woman actually on the executive. Do you… how have things worked out on the executive in terms of the way the workload is shared? Do you find the men expect you to do certain jobs?

ST: I don't do certain jobs – I do everything!

SB: You do everything? They got you onto the executive to come and do everything for them?

ST: Em, well, I wouldn't put it in that way, it's just that they now got used to the idea that, "*gee dit vir haar, sy [kan dit doen]*" ("Give it to her, she…" implying she is capable) It's because… you know, I always say it's how you do things. But they always leave everything to me. I always see that I tend to it, whether it's a day before the time or a year before the time, I will get it done.

SB: So, before you were there, how did they run the band?

ST: I would like to know that myself.

Evidently Hannes September with his wife Drikkie, as "father" and "mother" of the band, had done much of the organisational work in the early years and before Sharon Tockley was recruited as secretary. She was probably recruited because Mrs September was becoming old and frail and no longer able to assist the band.

With my limited involvement in the Christmas Bands Movement, having worked exclusively with St Joseph's until 2006, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that before the 1990s there had been female participants who marched in uniform. Although this participation was rare, I found its existence quite significant in a historically male space and male expressive form. I explore this aspect in relation to the Royal Crusaders Christmas Band.

Royal Crusaders Christmas Band

The Royal Crusaders Christmas Band is based in Bellville, in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. When I visited them in February 2008, I found the musical band constituted mostly of rather young members. What initiated my interest in the band were the eloquent and impassioned contributions of Mrs Ingrid Vink at a South African United Christmas Bands Board meeting. I learned that she was a middle-aged, middle-class woman and the vice-chairperson of the Royal Crusaders

Christmas Band. I was intrigued by her story, as her subject position was atypical, so I set out to interview her. The band was having a short meeting at her house the evening I arrived. The meeting illuminated the male/female roles and status of the membership of the musical band performing the "solo". There were 18 men and nine women. The men ranged in age from teenagers to men near retirement age, while the women ranged from teenagers to women in their early twenties, except for Mrs Vink, who was not part of the musical band.

What impressed me about this band was that the females were quite vocal in comparison with the males of corresponding ages. They did not appear to show undue deference (nor were they disrespectful) to age, experience or rank (as I was accustomed to in St Joseph's) and expected their opinions to be taken as seriously as anyone else's in the band, and they voiced many!

After the meeting, Mrs Vink suggested that I speak to the younger women in the band before I interviewed her. She later explained that as these young women had been in the band long before she joined, "it is only right that you speak to them first and understand their perspectives as well" (IV 02/25/08). It was from two of these young women that I learned about Mrs Schippers, a grandmother in her 70s who had been part of the Christmas bands for more than 40 years by this time. The stories of Mrs Schippers and Mrs Vink are significant as they represent the range of women's involvement in the bands, both in former years and currently.

Mrs Schippers was a founding member of the Royal Crusaders Christmas Band established in 1959. She was a Cupido and married into the Schippers family who had been part of the Young Guiding Stars Sacred String Band. The two families, along with the Davids, Du Preez, and Hendricks families, established the new band. She was already in her 30s when she first joined the band and was one of six women who participated in the band's performance activities by wearing their uniform and marching with the band on their house visitations. The women did not participate in the competitions, but sat on the field with the men and often saw to it that they were up to the task of the uniform review or "best-dressed band" category by casting their keen eyes over the uniforms to ensure that they were neat and tidy and that "everything was in place" for adjudication. They assumed the duty of taking care of the instruments and other belongings of the men while they participated in the various categories of the competitions. Later, when children were encouraged to join the bands, they also took care of the children, thus assuming the traditional gendered roles of females in society of care-giving and being supportive to the males (CS+ 04/04/08).

As my involvement with the bands was mostly with the southern suburbs organisations, it had not yet come to my attention that in the northern suburbs throughout the 1960s and 1970s there had been a few women who belonged to

bands and actively participated as members. Although they mostly performed similar organisational duties that seemed to be standard among many wives and mothers of the male participants of other bands, what was unusual about these women in the northern suburbs was that they wore the bands' uniforms and paraded in their neighbourhoods. In an interview with Michael Heuvel, the president of the SAUCCB, I learned that this situation pertained especially to rural bands where it was often difficult to recruit men into the bands. He suggested that these women usually participated in the category of "best-dressed band" at the competitions, although not in the "solo" (MH 5/06/07 and in conversation with various female members).

Another illuminating fact was that Mrs Schippers' granddaughter, Celeste Schippers, was the first girl to join the band, which did in 1986 when she was three years old. She remained the only girl for about six years, marching alongside the boys as a "tiny tot" member. Only when she was already a "junior" did other girls join the band in the mid-1990s. She did not find being the only girl, possibly in any band, strange, even when the supporters made a fuss over the fact, as it was something she grew up doing. At that stage, the children did not learn to play instruments and when she reached high school, she decided that she had had enough of marching in the band. Although she is no longer a member, she is still an ardent supporter of the band. Many of her younger female cousins are in the band and now play instruments, signalling the change since the mid-1990s (CS* 04/04/08).

Mrs Vink's involvement with the band seemed atypical at first in that she had become involved with the band through her grandchildren, who lived with her. They had enjoyed watching the band perform in their neighbourhood and wanted to learn to play wind instruments. Later in the interview, I learned that her husband was related to one of the founder families of the band and that she had been a fan since her marriage more than 40 years previously. Once her grandchildren joined the band, she also joined, in 2003, and was elected vice-chairperson in 2005.

When she joined the band, there were fewer women involved at the "senior" level (19 years and up), although there were some "juniors" who had more recently swelled the ranks of the "seniors". She pointed out quite an age gap in the female membership; the older women (except for herself) were in their late 60s and 70s, while the younger women were in their teens to mid-20s. She felt that the general trend in the band and the union was that it was attracting more women.

SB How do you think women are perceived in the band?

IV The perception changed a lot. It seems to me they take them much more seriously. And the respect actually for what they're doing and what they're achieving. And it's more acceptable now also, you know. Where previously

it's… they always tried to push them out and move them out. Now it changed quite a bit.

SB Why do you think this change has happened?

IV It seems to be more… it's becoming more acceptable. I don't think it's only the band.

SB Is this generally?

IV Yes, generally people became more acceptable of women being in leadership…

SB Positions

IV … you know, and partake in more things like that.

SB So you think it might be connected to the new South Africa?

IV I do think… it's got a lot to do with the new constitution and the new South Africa also, definitely!

Ingrid Vink links the current acceptance of women in leadership positions to the new South African Constitution and the general acceptance of the shifting position of women in a transitioning society. This excerpt also reveals an awareness of the new constitution as a document that has real consequences in many aspects of people's lives. This awareness has become more typical of formerly oppressed peoples who set much store by the promises of the document. Johnson (2014) shows how institutional dynamics are being affected through the inclusion of the bodies of historically excluded factions.

Mrs Shirley de Kock

Another female with an interesting involvement in the Christmas Bands Movement is Mrs Shirley de Kock. I met her at a workshop for the Athlone and Districts Union in November 2007, where she seemed to be the person in charge of organising the event. This was quite unusual, for although there were women at the event, they were, as usual, in charge of organising the food in another room. Shirley de Kock was in the workshop venue, agenda in hand, calling on the men to come forward and complete the tasks for which they were responsible, such as opening the meeting in prayer, addressing the members on certain issues, and so forth. Impressed by the integral status of this woman at the union level, I set out to meet and interview her. She is married to one of the sons of Mr Fred de Kock, "father" of the Young Guiding Stars Sacred String Band. Even before her marriage to his son, Mr de Kock invited her to a band meeting, recognising her potential as an organiser, as she was rather outspoken, and secretary of a netball club at the time. Though she claimed that as a

wife of a band member she had no choice but to be part of the peripheral structures of the band, unlike the other women she was accorded an integral status in the band and the federal structures of the Christmas Bands Movement.

Her initial appointment came as secretary of the band, a position in which she remained for 20 years, "just taking short breaks when I gave birth to my sons." Soon after, she was elected as a delegate to the Athlone and Districts Christmas Bands Union, which consists of five Christmas bands, where she became the secretary in 2000 after being recording secretary for a few months. In 2005, she became the secretary of the Western Province Christmas Bands Board, the federal structure of three Christmas Bands Unions. Although the positions she assumed were the gendered role of the secretary, this is a powerful position in all these organisations. Because she is extremely competent, she is often left alone to do the day-to-day decision-making of the organisations. She complains about the unfairness of her situation and the presumption of the men that she will cope with any matters arising. Both Shirley de Kock and Sharon Tockley complained about the lack of male involvement once they came on board the executive structures. This situation probably characterises their roles in the domicile, where women take charge of running their households, including managing the finances.

Shirley de Kock is not a performing member of the band. Although she does not like to wear the uniform at competitions, preferring "to dress more fashionably" in her own clothing, as she put it, she was recently requested to wear her uniform on the field, even though she does not participate in band events beyond handing over the correct trophies to the person presenting them and being integrally involved in the day's procedure. The uniform adjudicators felt she looked "naked" on the field,[14] so she now wears the uniform of the executive of either the union or the board, depending on which competition she is attending. Besides the conservatism that this shows, perhaps related to Christian attitudes to dress, it is also likely that the participation of women is seen as normative, along with the wearing of a uniform. The complaint came from the uniform adjudicators themselves, which suggests that like everyone else, women were expected to be subject to the dress code. In any case, Shirley de Kock was unusually public and prominent, while other women's roles were usually more circumscribed.

Women as music educators

A more conventional role for women in the bands is that of musical instructor. In St Joseph's, I was often told about (and compared with) their beloved instructor in the early years of the band, Mrs Ulster (née Theunissen), about whom I wrote in Chapter 4. By the sound of it, she was a formidable person for whom the older members

had the utmost respect. It seemed to be customary practice in aspiring middle-class families that young girls learned to play the piano, often ending up teaching from home or in schools and involved in musical activities in church. I interviewed several women who performed similar roles of coaching the bands, and share some of their experiences in the pages that follow.

Ms Christine Fondling

From when I attended the City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union competitions, I was aware of an elderly woman conducting the Bethlehem Stars Christmas Band. With her stoic face, dressed neatly in clothing that matched the severity of the band's uniform, preferring to wear a skirt instead of the trousers, she seemed to epitomise the respectability of the bands.

Ms Fondling, who was 74 years old at the time of the interview, only formally learned to play the piano in her late teens, although she had been playing the instrument since she was much younger. She was initially taught by her father, who

Figure 16 Ms Christine Fondling (left) with her sister who are members of the Bethlehem Stars Christmas Band.

thought it was necessary to keep his daughters appropriately occupied at home:"he always used to say, boys can go out; they can meet the other boys on the street. But what are we going to do with the girls? Then we were four sisters. And then he thought of buying a piano" (CF 12/03/08).[15] She studied piano for a number of years into her 20s, taking the graded examinations of Trinity College of London. She was quite an active musician in the church, performing on the violin with a string ensemble at local functions and teaching young children at a primary school. That is how she became known as a musician in her community and was approached by a member of her church who belonged to the Perseverance Christmas Band to assist them at their practices. She stayed with them for only a short time, playing the competition piece for them on the organ so that they could familiarise themselves with the tune, and assisting the "juniors" with their choral piece. She really played a more significant role as music coach of the Bethlehem Stars Christmas Band, where she had been for 20 years. She was asked to register with the band after assisting them for a year or two and she usually attends the general meetings but has not served on the executive. Other women have been on the executive and she claims that the secretary of the band "has always been a lady". During the interview, she complained about the lack of female performers and showed ambivalence about her subjectivity as female and musical leader of the band.

CF But we haven't got [female] players.

SB Why is that?

CF I don't know, man.

SB Is it that the women don't think that they should play?

CF You know some of them, some of the women they think that the music and the competitions [are] only meant for men.

SB Well, initially they were. But now things are changing.

CF Yah, sometimes they think, because when I got to them, I thought you must get a male to stand in front of your choir.

SB Because there were only males playing?

CF And you see the thing is this, these male people, they won't listen to you so easily.

SB Do they not listen to you?

CF No, look, *hulle's bang vir my!* [they're scared of me!]

SB They're scared of you?

CF No, the thing is this man, because they know so little. And sometimes when I don't want to stand there in front of them. Then they ask, what is wrong with you Auntie Stienie? Why don't you come, move to the front, why don't you want...? I said no, it's not that. But some of the men folk they don't want to be taught by women.

SB Really?

CF Yah. You know, moving among men, you will see. Your voice counts very little. But now with us [intimating she and I as musicians ourselves] they don't know, they don't know...

SB Yah, but if they know that they know very little and you clearly know more than them, don't they respect that?

CF But they know they know very little. I've got a very nice band, a very nice band, I can't complain about them. I've got a very nice band.

SB And they listen to you?

CF Yah, [laughs] they're very nice. They're very nice.

Her ambivalence is clearly underscored by male ambivalence towards her and her musical authority. Although she senses the men's ambivalence, "these male people, they won't listen to you so easily," this is quickly brushed aside as she remembers how good they are to her. This was emphasised later when she informed me how they often telephoned her "just to chat and to keep me informed" of the daily happenings of the band.

Star of Calvary Christmas Band

Mrs Bridget Engel grew up surrounded by the local practices of the Western Cape in the middle-class suburb of Heathfield. Since her grandparents were the oldest people in the neighbourhood, the local band, Star of Calvary Christmas Band, came to play at their home during the annual road marches. As a child, she enjoyed following the band around the neighbourhood. She also enjoyed attending the annual carnival parade in the city centre. Her dad was a local jazz musician and she and two other sisters out of eight siblings learned to play music. She studied music formally with well-known music teachers in the coloured community and did her teacher training at Battswood College,[16] after which she taught class music (mainly singing), amongst other subjects, for 38 years. She was peripherally involved in the Star of Calvary Christmas Band for 10 years, finding suitable pieces for them, and she had assisted the junior choir on request for six years. In 2008, she was asked to conduct the band in the union competition since the regular conductor, Rochelle Klassen, was performing

with the band. She exudes an excitement about working with the band and becoming more deeply involved, thereby challenging her own musical abilities by arranging pieces for the band's specific instrumental format.

Working alongside her is Rochelle Klassen, roped into working with the Star of Calvary Christmas Band, arranging its music and directing it for competitions. Rochelle was quite adamant that women had always played a much more significant role than perhaps realised by people who were not intimately involved in the Christmas bands.

RK: Well, at first, my very first impression when I got to Star of Calvary was that the women really ruled the roost there.

SB: Really?

RK: Yes.

SB: And who were these women?

RK: On the musical side, Mrs Arendse and Mrs Engel. But it's more than that as well. When kids and people have to come to practices and husbands have to be there, the women are there to see that they are there. Their wives and other halves and the mothers of these kids, they're always bringing the kids there, always supporting, making sure there's food, and if those support structures are not there, you can't really get your work done. When it comes to uniforms, the women are on the ball, they know what goes with what.

SB: So, the women decide on the uniform?

RK: Not always, but there is women's input, particularly if I had to think of one person specifically, apart from the Couzette (founding family of the band) spouses, there is a Mrs Jacobs, Patrick Jacobs' wife, they give their input about the uniform and the choices of colours, there's a lot of women's input. And especially functions for fundraising, I don't think that without the women those functions would be a success. If I think about the funds raised now for the music evening, the men might have provided the venue and possibly the items, but when it came to the catering and the ticket sales, the women were really on board, they really have contributed in that way. They might not be present in the band, but just to see that the kids are there.

SB: Do they attend some of the practices?

RK: Yes, a lot of them sit and watch and stay and give their input. They always say, "oh yes, that was very nice," whether it's an informed input, it doesn't really matter, it's input nonetheless.

SB: So they're like the backbone of the band.

RK: Very much the backbone, yes. (RK 08/07/28)

According to Rochelle, this influence of the women can even affect the band's repertoire:

RK: They [men] were thinking they were running the show, but quietly [laughs], I know there are women in the background who pretend they are not registered members. But there's often someone who says, "you haven't played that song in a while", which does affect. Then suddenly that song appears and becomes part of your repertoire; it's not by accident!

SB: That's quite interesting.

RK: And if you think about it, at competition times, the people who fill the buses are the women. They bring family members, invite [others], bring picnics, make a day of it, they really make those outings successful ones. As far as the band is concerned, within our band, there's a lot of respect for women. There are those oppositional areas when you want this to happen, but that's so few and far between instances where you have to fight [for your position]. In our band, not everyone has musical knowledge, so most of the time they accept me at face value and I don't have to say, I know this is right because I've studied [music] and it should be this way. I've been very fortunate to have their trust. If there was opposition, it was outside the band, never inside the band. They might have disagreed with things I've done, but they went along with it, which shows support. (RK 08/07/28)

Although she mostly felt respected and supported by the band, members in positions of authority can be tested to their limits at competition time and the support can feel fragile. One year she took an unconventional decision concerning the musical arrangement, adding a drum and cymbal to the instrumentation. She checked with the union officials whether this would be in order, making sure not to offend band traditions. After the union officials had initially assured her that there were no rules in the constitution to oppose her decision, she was telephoned two weeks later, about a week before the competitions, and informed that those were not traditional Christmas band instruments and if she went ahead with her unusual arrangement, the band would be disqualified. She dug in her heels and went ahead anyway. Having already worked with the band on this arrangement for a few weeks, she felt that she had not been fairly treated. Surprisingly, the band accepted her leadership on the matter, although the experience did not leave her unscathed.

RK: That was a low moment for me and I did question if it was done by a male, whether it would have been the same. It most probably would have, yah.

SB: You think so?

RK: I don't know. I don't want to say that it was. I felt I was not taken seriously [because she was a woman] at the time. So, some of the band members did object, the one thought I was being disobedient.

SB: That was a male?

RK: Yes.

SB: So, do you feel in your *band*, it was because you were a female, or in the *union*?

RK: A bit of both. Ninety per cent of the time, the opposition comes from outside of my band. And it is a bit much to ask those men to trust me, but when it came down to it, there was one chap who did not want to walk out onto the field and play with us because we were being disqualified. (RK 08/07/28)

The incident was clearly a painful experience for Rochelle Klassen. She too seemed to be struggling with her subjectivity within the band. Like Ms Fondling, her ambivalence seemed to be underscored by male ambivalence towards her as a female, band director and musical authority. Yet again, she cast doubt on herself and her behaviour, in which she dared the men to trust her judgment on the matter. The fact that she was new to this expressive practice might also have affected their relationship and responses to her modus operandi. New methods of working can be either warmly embraced or coldly rejected. In my own case, I found St Joseph's members very trusting of my expertise and they warmly embraced my new ideas in the band rehearsals. They even reminded me in subsequent practices when I forgot to implement ideas that I had introduced, such as deep breathing exercises at the beginning of rehearsals. Then again, I have also heard men complain that women want to introduce new ideas into the band and do things their way, trying to change the way the bands operated in the past. This complaint is significant, considering the women's experiences on the executive structures, where men often leave the daily running of the band to them. In any case, the men's accusations have the potential to create considerable tension. However, when I asked the question directly of a male as to whether women changed the nature of the bands, he answered, "That is very difficult to answer" (KM 08/04/08), which, in itself, is quite telling.

Two male members corroborated the kind of female support Rochelle Klassen suggested was integral to the bands' functioning. In an interview with Anthony

Tockley, he alluded to the problem St Joseph's was having with retaining their younger members. The reason he gave was that since many of them did not play instruments, they were just "fading away." I asked how they had been able to sustain their interest in the past, since I knew that the "juniors" were not necessarily in a different position then regarding playing instruments. He suggested that the functions and events organised by the women's committees kept the band together (AT 07/18/06).

Mr Sprinkle also spoke well of the working committees that prepared food for the youngsters at the workshops he organised for them during their vacations. According to him, "The working committees see that there's something to eat for them; this is where we involve the wives and girlfriends. I mean you can do nothing without the women!" Like Rochelle, he maintained that the women made competition events "family days", arriving with their picnic baskets from early on in the morning (CS 07/19/01).

In my first few years in St Joseph's, the presence of women on these committees was limited. With most women having to work these days, they have less time to be involved in band structures. As more women join the band and become involved in the executive structure, this situation may well change.

Women in executive positions

Other women with whom I spoke or had short telephonic interviews were those involved in the executive structures of their bands and unions, and, in one case, in the executive of the board. These women had typically been involved in the Christmas bands for decades and were able to join formally or become fully participant members in the 1990s.

Mrs Sheena Baron was a member of Palm Crusaders Christmas Band, affiliated with the Peninsula and District Christmas Bands Union.[17] She had been an active member of the band for more or less 30 years after her son joined as a "tiny tot". She was part of the women's committees, "always in the background". She insisted that the women on these committees were also registered members of Palm Crusaders then. Women formally became part of the band in 1990 when they were allowed to be in uniform, be on the field at competitions and participate in the structures of the band. She had been the only female member of the executive for 10 years, occupying various positions such as assistant secretary, trustee, deputy-chair, captain in 2007, and vice-captain. She was unable to maintain the position of captain when the band's constitution was revised so that only musicians could become captains, to which she fully agreed. When asked how the men responded to her being captain and on the executive, she said, "they took it very comfortably," which she hinted was due to her commitment. She did whatever was needed to the best of her ability; she

"always produced" for the band. Although only a delegate at the union meetings, she was elected to the board executive and held various positions: trustee, treasurer and assistant treasurer. She was the only female on the board executive. She asserted that Palm Crusaders Christmas Band had a large contingent of girls and women in the squad: there were about 80 "tiny tots" and "juniors", of which three-quarters were girls, and there were 16 senior females, 14 of whom played instruments, except herself and an 80-year-old woman (telephonic interview 08/04/08).

I met Delecia Maarman, the secretary of Perseverance Christmas Band, at a band practice I attended in August 2008. She was in her third two-year term on the executive. She had formally registered with the band in 2000, although she had been assisting in the women's committees for a long time. She was at the practice to hand out letters to the youngsters, as they were having a parents' meeting on the following Sunday. She had the band's membership list with her, on which 239 names were listed. I asked her how strong the women were in the band and she counted 46 active women with about 20 less active ones. The oldest woman was 82 years old and had been involved in the committees for more than 30 years. The first girls to join the band were "juniors" in 1996.

Currently, women occupied seven of the 16 executive positions; their portfolios were PRO, secretary, assistant secretary, recording secretary, assistant treasurer, trustee, and an additional member. In 2000, the executive took the decision that all registered members should participate in either marching or playing an instrument; no one was allowed to be a member and serve only on the committees. She claimed that the women observed a strict dress code on competition day: no jewellery was allowed, except for a wedding band; all women wore one plait with a ribbon.

These descriptions illustrate not only the historical role of women in the bands, but also their changing role since the advent of democratic processes in South Africa. Although women are commonly voted into the gendered roles of secretary and treasurer (perhaps here synonymous with household bookkeeping, which is often the prerogative of wives), the more prestigious executive positions such as bandmaster and captain are being opened up to capable women who are either musicians or have vocations in military or paramilitary structures (RK 07/28/08).

Gendered citizenship

While the new South African Constitution has presented female subjectivities with a sociopolitical milieu in which to change historicised perceptions of their gendered selves, the entrenched patriarchy and paternalism has not been easy to confront. Women thus find themselves having to work much harder than their male counterparts, or they have to be highly efficient to prove their capability in their new

authoritative positions. This is a widespread predicament in South African society. According to Hassim (2005, 343), despite the formal commitments, "gender equality was not prioritized as an area for legislative attention" in the first few years of the new government. In any case, women carried (and were expected to by their male counterparts) the discourse on women in Parliament, which became "another terrain of struggle" for women (Geisler 2000, 1; see also Govender, 2007). While the notion of quotas for both race and gender marks an indisputable and a visual commitment to change, quotas do not necessarily change the dominant institutional cultures: blacks and women are expected to assimilate into the existing institutional context.[18] For many women at diverse levels in society this has translated into "granting women presence but not power" (Hassim 1999, 14).

The ushering in of democracy has granted everyone citizenship, yet citizenship incorporates men and woman differently; as feminists have pointed out, there is a "fundamental masculinism" to its foundations (Hassim 1999, 8). This is as a result of the gendered nature of formal politics, which operates in "the public sphere (the state, civil society)" as distinguished from "the private sphere (the family)" (Hassim 1999, 8). Drawing on feminist debates, Hassim (1999, 12) suggests that these two spheres shape each other and that women's effective citizenship is limited by "the unequal power that men and women have in the domestic (or private) realm."

Nevertheless, women are redefining their historicised roles as women and citizens of the country within many different social and cultural realms. As the above examples from the Christmas Bands Movement illustrate, the women in the bands are taking full advantage of their newfound liberties in South Africa. Significantly, women in the bands have demanded to be released from their hidden positions in the private sphere (from activities related to the domicile only) and to be propelled into the public sphere of the street parades and band contests. Although women are still expected to perform their "natural" roles as carers and nurturers in the bands, they are steadily eroding the all-male preserve of the Christmas Bands Movement.

When women are not part of the performance activities of St Joseph's, the men quite easily adopted the role of caring for the "tiny tots". When women are available, they try to relinquish this task. This happened to me once when I paraded with the band in my first year but did not play the clarinet as my hands were troubling me. I was given the task of looking after the little ones on the parade. This meant walking behind or alongside the "tiny tots" and taking care of any needs that might arise. As a woman, I do not fall easily into this naturalised role, so I saw to it that I always had my instrument with me on parades. Other women did not escape so easily on joining the band. Nevertheless, as many fathers bring their children into the bands, they are naturally the ones to whom the children turn, and these fathers adopt a caring attitude towards other young children as well. Those women who have important

executive positions are recognised as being too busy with band business to adopt these naturalised roles.

Conclusion

But what of the ever-growing female presence in the Christmas bands? Will this change the nature of the practice or merely people's perceptions of it? In her article "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," Judith Butler (1988) argues that gender identity is constituted through repetitious acts and an embodiment of corporeal styles. These repetitious acts, which inscribe social norms in the body, are simultaneously a re-enactment and re-experiencing of socially established meanings, which are given legitimation through their repetition. In the same way that gender is not a "stable identity" but the "effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body" (Butler 1990, 140), the identity of Christmas bands as an exclusive male preserve is no longer valid. In the Christmas bands, the "stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988, 519) has historically signalled a gendered body inscribed male through military-like uniforms, precision marching, and performing on string and wind instruments. This gendered "performative act" has been ruptured by the insistence of females on participating in this expressive form.

While the older generation of women largely left the gendered constitution of the Christmas bands intact, barring the few exceptions mentioned earlier, the younger generations entering the bands have clearly begun to break away from the former gendered subjectivities and "repetitious acts" of the older women in the bands. Through their different acts of repetition – now performing on instruments, as drum majors, or asserting their musical or disciplinary expertise as musical directors and captains – they have transformed the historically gendered nature of Christmas bands by "subversive repetition of that style" (Butler 1988, 520). A comparative view of past and present images of Christmas bands reveals a decisive move away from medium-sized bands of around 20 mostly middle-aged and older men to large bands of men, women and children embodying cultural possibilities "conditioned and circumscribed" (Butler 1988, 521) by current sociohistorical conventions.

How then does militarism fit into issues of gender transformation? Fanon's (1986, 142) dictum that "[m]ilitarization and the centralization of authority in a country automatically entail a resurgence of the authority of the father" presents a fascinating contention in terms of the prominence of militarism in the Christmas bands. Significantly, the strict militarism evidenced in the Christmas bands probably increased during the 1990s, at the same time that women entered the bands as performers. This increased militarisation can be ascribed to the involvement of the military as adjudicators and the fact that increased numbers of Christmas band

members have vocations in the military and police. The more militarised bands have fared better, especially in the "grand march past" category.

However, two significant matters concerning women's position in the military and as adjudicators are important to mention here. Firstly, women are prominently featured in military and paramilitary structures: Lindiwe Sisulu (Minister of Defence, 2009–2012) and Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula (Minister of Correctional Services from 2009 to 2012; Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, 2012), as was the former Chief of Police, Mangwashi Phiyega.

Secondly, female military adjudicators work alongside the men and can often be the adjudicator to whom the *voorloper* reports, visibly suggesting their importance – the women are not merely there to support the men. These displays have deemphasised the military as an exclusively male domain and can certainly inspire young female Christmas band members to aspire to careers in those institutions. In fact, the military drill and discipline that they learn in the bands can serve them well in pursuing a career in the military.

It is gratifying to witness the gendered transformations occurring in the Christmas Bands Movement and to note that sometimes these changes are spearheaded by both genders, as in the inclusion of women in St Joseph's. Despite the FHR report that the women's sector has declined since the gaining of democracy and that many women – particularly the most marginalised, impoverished and rural women – still do not enjoy the benefits brought about by the democratic process, women are taking up the cudgel and implementing changes at different levels of society. Although voluntary organisations such as Christmas bands cannot change the structural relations and lived experience of women in society, the women in the Christmas bands have demonstrated the appropriation of practical citizenship through their actions.

Notes

1 See Rörich (1989); James (1999); Muller (1999); Allen (2000); Ballantine (2000); Impey (2006); and Jorritsma (2006) for research on South African music, and Walker (1982); Bozzoli (1991); Villa-Vicencio (1995); Geisler (2000); McEwan (2001); Salo (2004); Gouws (2005); and Hassim (1999 and 2005) for research on history, sociology and gender studies.

2 The Black Sash was a white liberal organisation established in 1955 by six white women to oppose the Senate Bill and the Separate Representation of Voters Bill, which effectively disenfranchised coloured people. Initially calling themselves Women's Defence of the Constitution League, they attracted mainly housewives with support from a few men and wore black sashes across their bodies to mourn the death of constitutional rights. They were ineffective in opposing the Bills but continued to oppose many other laws, such as the pass laws, and assisted Africans with problems including influx control, contracts, unemployment, housing and pensions (Saunders and Southey 2001). They

were a constant thorn in the flesh of the apartheid government and were often seen protesting in cities and near parliament wearing their iconic black sashes.

3 For a comparative study, see Kamya (2009), who writes on women and democracy in Uganda. She seriously challenges the commonly held assumption that democratisation leads to increased gender equality. She suggests that there are grave social and practical constraints related to class and advocates for affirmative action as a state-led, top-down strategy to increase women's political participation.

4 Yet this same government was able to successfully host a FIFA Soccer World Cup in 2010 that cost billions of rand. A further blight on the ANC government is the corrupt arms deal it engaged in (1994) that also cost the country billions (Govender 2007 and Feinstein 2009).

5 Although the home is perceived as a wholesome, safe place, Das (2008, 292) asserts that "[t]he home is often the place of masculine dominion."

6 Earlier Kadalie (2009, 89) quotes the political analyst Steven Friedman, who exposed the "charade" of electing women to government positions, which "was not necessarily a victory for women or democracy."

7 Louise du Toit (2005, 253, 254) asserts that "South Africa's 'world record' rape rate relegates its women and children to second class citizenship," and she refers to the "much-quoted statistic that a woman is raped in South Africa every 26 seconds."

8 The recent protests by female students at Rhodes University highlighted this issue in quite an extreme manner ("Bare-breasted rape protest gets 50%" 2016; "Extreme measures in protests are sign of desperation" 2016).

9 A recent publication shows this reformulation and reinvigoration of marginal social identities in the post-apartheid context (see Meyer, Durrheim and Foster 2016).

10 Unfortunately, I could not interview Mrs September as she was very ill during my first year with St Joseph's and passed away later in that year.

11 A female interviewee, Ingrid Vink (see her biography later), also suggested that in the band to which she belonged the girls were initially "side-tracked" by their boyfriends, but that this situation did not exist any longer; the girls were now much more committed to the band.

12 Dworkin et al. (2012) documented a similar ambivalence towards the acceptance of women and changing gender relations in society.

13 Interestingly, the bandmaster's enthusiasm for female participation was based on a longstanding gendering of instrumentation.

14 She mentioned that it had been an extremely hot day and she was wearing a "see-through" blouse, but she also showed disapproval for whomever it was who made the observation.

15 Again, the notion of respectability reasserts itself here; the streets are perceived as rough places and out of bounds for girls from respectable families.

16 A teacher training college for women who were trained to teach at primary schools under the auspices of the Coloured Affairs Department during apartheid.

17 This was at the time of the interview. The union has since left the board, but Sheena Baron has remained with the board and joined another Christmas band.

18 Erasmus (2005, 14–15) discusses this dilemma regarding racial inclusion in academic institutions.

7

Reflections and conclusions

Christmas bands have been integral to the end-of-year Christmas and New Year celebrations in Cape Town and the broader Western Cape region since the colonial era. They are large Christian-based community organisations that have strong familial bonds and as such are responsible for setting down the moral codes by which people live. Although documented evidence suggests that Christmas bands have been in existence since the mid-1800s, they have survived in their current form since the early twentieth century, as represented by about 80 extant bands that mostly emerged during the years of the 1920s and 1930s through to the1950s. These dates are notable for the way in which they coincide with the two global wars that occurred in the twentieth century. The visible increase in military personnel and uniformed men must have provided some of the immediate influences and aspirations for the Christmas bands, which then offered a localisation of the dazzling spectacle of the military.

Earlier influences are the Church Lads Brigades and Salvation Army, the latter also inspired by the militarisation of Britain in the mid-1800s from which they consequently adopted the metaphor of a "muscular Christianity", which they exported all over the world. The strong correlation between the Christmas bands and the Church Lads Brigades came especially through the Anglican and Dutch Reformed Churches. Many men involved in the brigade structures, particularly the drill instructors, have either been members of Christmas bands or have assisted the bands with drilling and marching. Underpinning all these Christian-based organisations is the Victorian moral force evinced by the temperance movement. The values of temperance, discipline, order and respectability have been the moral underpinning of these organisations and the Christmas Bands Movement adopted these values and ideas of self-reliance, progress and self-improvement to constitute their organisations as collectives and themselves as individuals.

Currently the approximately 80 bands in existence belong to various Christmas Bands Unions, which in turn form the two federal structures known as Christmas Bands Boards. They are all voluntary organisations that operate along the lines of common meeting procedures and function fairly democratically as organisations.

They employ disciplinary practices around uniform dress, parading and playing of instruments that are channelled towards the annual road marches and competitive displays. The road marches or street parades in their communities start on Christmas Eve and can last until March.

These road marches are not peculiar to the Christmas bands. They are also part of the year-end activities of the Malay choirs and the *klopse* (minstrel troupes) that form the three parading "disciplines" in the city of Cape Town. Together these three cultural practices form the *ghoema* musical complex, which is characterised musically by the underlying *ghoema* rhythm played on the *ghoema* drum in the Malay choirs and *klopse* and driven by the banjos in the Christmas bands. Recently the bass drum and snares have been encroaching in some Christmas bands, changing the sound from a reverent tone to one more characteristic of the *ghoema* sound and invoking (disparaging) names such as "*klopse* bands" from the more conservative and critical members. Other common characteristics are the wearing of uniforms, the annual competitions, and the sharing of a *tafel* on the road marches.

Each Christmas band member receives an annual visitation from the band,[1] which seems to represent a renewal of friendship or even allegiance between the family of the member and the band. This renewal is enacted through playing music, feasting, an exchange of words of encouragement, comfort or gratitude, and prayer. It is especially when the bands are out in the communities, in the public gaze, that their moral codes are strictly enforced. Fundamental to their practice is the notion of musical ministry, which is visible to the community through the bands' strict conduct, the precise execution of the march, and the Christian hymns that they play. This underlying militarism, along with a prevailing Christian ethos, relates to the idea that they are Christian "soldiers". During their annual road marches, they also visit the elderly and infirm, to whom they minister through prayer and musically through playing old favourite hymns.

This connection between Christian-based moral organisations and the military became evident to me when my father reminisced about how he once felt such pride as a young boy during the Second World War when he paraded in the streets of George (a medium-sized coastal town back then) as a member of the Anglican Church Lads Brigade. On hearing the band, a British Army officer came out of the hotel where a British platoon was staying to salute them. Of course, in those war years the British military was extremely inspirational and well respected. In the early days of British colonial rule, too, the British Army uniform inspired many volunteers to acquire a uniform and join the spectacle of the military review on Cape Town's Grand Parade. The uniform, in general, remained a symbol of respectability throughout the years of apartheid rule.

The wearing of uniforms is thus central to the way in which all these Christian-based structures identify themselves as members of a particular organisation. The uniform also serves as a visual representation and embodiment of the values of order, discipline and respectability. The symbolic significance of the Christmas band's uniform excludes anyone from wearing the uniform at any other time, although the men wear their much older uniforms to church and other formal functions. Their reverence for the uniform is obvious in the pride with which the men talk about their past uniforms; some whom I interviewed still have these uniforms, hanging neatly in their wardrobes covered by dust protectors.[2] Nevertheless, militarisation in the bands represents a distinctly local imagining and performance of western middle-class modernity.

For certain youngsters, joining a Christmas band can bring about positive changes in their lives. Through their musical education in the bands, they are given a chance to change the usual trajectory of entering a dead-end job where they will spend the rest of their lives, and many have been able to study music at universities. I interviewed two such students, Byron Abrahams and Ronaldo Wales at the University of Cape Town. Mrs Ingrid Vink of the Royal Crusaders Christmas Band in Bellville also informed me that musical education in the bands has significantly changed the demographics of Cape Town's youth orchestra and wind bands; she has noticed that many of the participants in these youth orchestras are coloured young people whom she recognised from the bands. Pamela Kierman, brass teacher at Stellenbosch University, expressed a similar view: she found that most of the South African Police Band's brass players came from the (coloured) Church Brigade structures in the Western Cape.[3]

The issue of the typical sound of the Christmas bands is implicated here: as the youth are becoming more educated and musically literate and are infiltrating "other" formats such as classical orchestras and wind bands, so the sound of the bands is beginning to change. This could potentially change the nature of performance in the bands. However, these young people are not only aware of, but are also appreciative of, this unique Christmas band sound of Cape Town and the Western Cape, and even though the perceived technical inaccuracies run contrary to all their classical training, they are eager to retain this authentic, representative sound.

The Christmas Bands Movement was ostensibly a male-only organisation for most of the twentieth century. Women played supportive roles, but their contributions were hardly insignificant, and their encouraging presence at home or as organisers of band activities was probably a major reason the bands were able to exist fairly successfully for such a long period. Women were involved in activities that coincided with their gendered roles in the domicile, of course, but often their fundraising activities brought much-needed revenue to cover the extensive costs of

uniforms and instruments. Women were only formally allowed to join Christmas bands as performers in the 1990s, when the political climate was rapidly changing in South Africa and with the broader societal recognition of gender equality in post-democracy South Africa.

However, although women only became involved in the actual performance activities of the bands in their recent history, in certain bands in the northern suburbs women had already been parading with the bands in their communities and at competitions and wore uniforms, though they usually opted to wear a skirt instead of trousers. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the new South African Constitution has socially opened a new space for women to change their historicised positions and the women of the Christmas Bands Movement are taking full advantage of the greater possibilities for involvement this new political dimension has opened up. Significantly, however, the masculine uniform facilitated the entrance of women as performers into the Christmas bands during the 1990s.

Since women now wear the same uniform as the men, they do not disturb the visual representation of the Christmas bands and it seems easier for the men to include them on that basis. In this instance, the uniform operates like a mask: understood to be something that covers the face and parts of the body to disguise or conceal

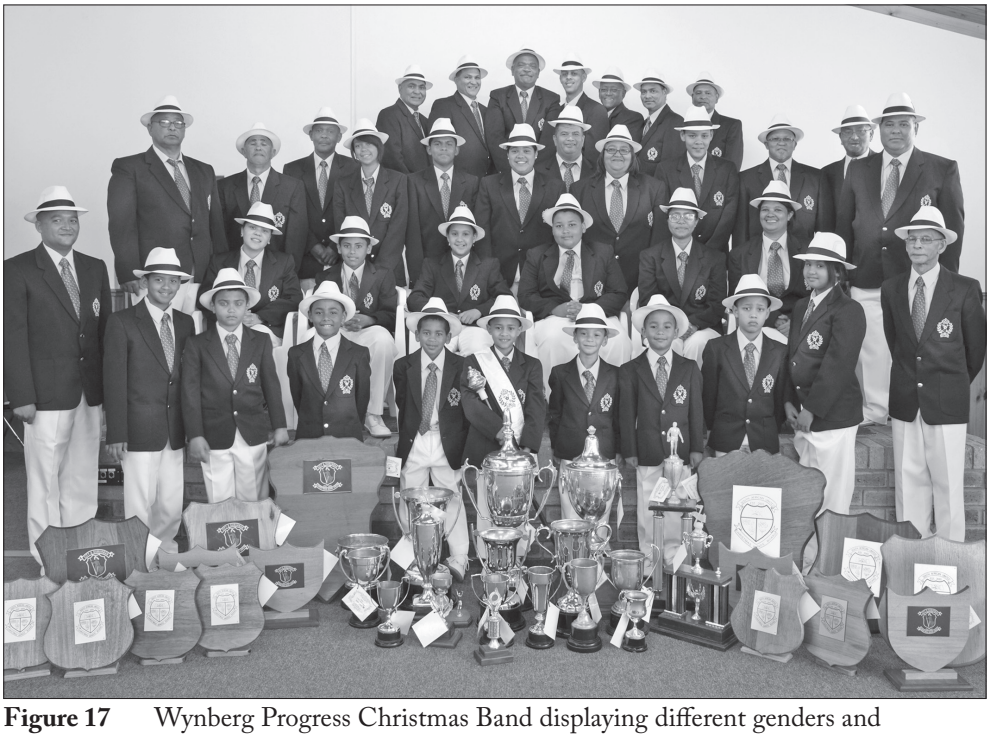


Figure 17 Wynberg Progress Christmas Band displaying different genders and generations.

the person's true identity. Yet, as it conceals or masks the performer's identity, it also reveals something new or different; the mask is thus concerned with a redefinition of identity (Picton 2002, 51). The redefinition of the band members' identities relates to that of upright, splendidly clothed, music-ministering Christian soldiers. It seems that, *because* their uniform works as a mask rather than a costume, women have achieved inclusion without a real threat to the essence and form of the practice. The practice is accordingly transformed in keeping with the inevitable changes in society.

In this ethnography of the extensive performance practice known as the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape, South Africa, I chose to delimit the study by investigating only certain aspects of the bands' expressive practice: first, history and organisational procedures; second, annual rituals and performance arenas; third, community sound and musical education; fourth, influence of the military and regimental Christian organisations; and lastly, gender relations and notions of masculinity in the bands.

The title of the book, "Parading Respectability," encompasses a duality that is at the heart of my findings in this research: the literal parading in a disciplined and orderly manner on road marches and in competitions, and the figurative yet ostentatious exhibiting of respectability. While I did not focus on their parades as ostentatious exhibitions, the representation or embodiment of a particular Christian respectability through neat uniforms, precision marching, hymn playing and prayers has been most striking in researching this community practice. Although there is a close intertwining of the literal and figurative meanings in the word "parade", I do not wish to assert the notion of pretence in what the bands do, but rather that this duality has served the band community quite effectively. This embodiment of respectability, along with the adoption of a military ethic, has dignified and "made respectable" an otherwise historically maligned and still marginalised community: the community of poor, working-class, predominantly Christian coloured people. Members of the Christmas Bands Movement constitute their subjectivities as morally upright citizens, both individually and collectively, through a complex of annual ritualised practices during the road marches and competitions. Despite their continuing marginalisation on a national level politically, culturally and economically, they nevertheless proudly enact their inalienable right to citizenship annually through the visible, yet orderly, occupation of the streets in the city and in their neighbourhoods during the season. This enactment, this display of identity and self-confidence, influences the communities throughout the year, although it may trail off; hence the need for annual renewal.

This research is important for several reasons. First, it is the only complete documentation of the cultural phenomenon known simply as the Christmas bands.

Second, it investigates coloured subjectivities through their participation in an expressive practice that includes street parades and music making. While the practice is not unusual, it is peculiar in South Africa to Cape Town and the Western Cape, the ancestral place of coloured people. Although there has been growing research on coloured identity, as I have shown in Chapter 1, this research differs from the former by its focus on individual subjectivities and their influence on a particular cultural cohort, thus showing how subjectivities are produced through collective experience. Third, it theorises competitions as spectacular events that take the place of ritual in modern societies, thereby effecting a temporary change – bringing about strong community bonds and feelings of togetherness – in the communities involved. Fourth, I have shown how music facilitates the performance of an ethical/aesthetical citizenship through the embodiment of respectability. Finally, this research dispels disparaging notions that (lower-class) coloured people lack culture, showing instead that though they are a marginal and marginalised grouping nationally, they are certainly beginning to infiltrate regional and national cultural institutions through their involvement as musicians and bandsmen and -women.

One aspect of this history that I did not choose to ignore but was unable to address was the effect of the Group Areas Act on individual bands and band members (and their families) from the 1960s to the 1990s. Despite my consciously introducing the topic during discussions, it was never mentioned as a significant issue that was worth pursuing in depth during the interviews. Interviewees did not seem to want to talk about it and I did not want to insist that they do, and so allowed them to dictate what was important for them to discuss. In the split-second decision to pursue the topic or not in the interview, I could not always assess how they felt about this issue. Often there seemed to be an air of resignation rather than indignation, as is more commonly expressed by members of the coloured community when talking about the forced removals during the 1960s and 1970s. Their lack of engagement with this topic was possibly due to the absence of the effect of Group Areas with its attendant forced removals and other social upheavals on the particular bands that I chose to research. There may have been bands in other communities who were more seriously affected: bands from a place like District Six, for example, which has had excessive media exposure around forced removals. These bands may have shown this historical blight to have had a far worse impact than the bands formerly from Newlands that I focused on. Also, since there is hardly any existing research or media exposure on the Newlands community, the issue may be less burning for former members of that community. This, then, is an issue still to be explored in relation to Christmas bands, and I have no doubt that new research would not only increase our knowledge of the bands, perhaps shedding light on the subtle distinctions between the musical

expression of different bands, but may also add another, musical, dimension to existing studies on forced removals in the Western Cape.

What of the future of this practice? By all accounts it is growing. It has grown significantly, particularly over the past two decades, with the inclusion of women in the performance aspects of the practice. Not only have numbers in the bands increased with the inclusion of women, but there has also been a growth of musical and life skills, particularly for children who become involved in the bands. From my interviews, I gained the sense that there has been moral growth as well, albeit based on a Christian morality of upright citizenship, which includes discouraging the consumption of alcohol.

The fact that the larger coloured community still feels marginalised in the new political dispensation may very well have influenced the growth and maintenance of this expressive practice. Most of all, it is the inclusion of entire families, including extended families and neighbours, that really ensures its continued existence. Members and supporters bond as extended families and restricted communities: as a unique cultural cohort that subscribes to and upholds, against many odds, its religious, cultural, social, and musical values.

Notes

1 Historically, this was true for all bands, but some very large bands are unable to accommodate all their membership in the same annual season so members may only be visited every other year.

2 A member of St Joseph's who did not have money to buy himself a wedding suit requested permission from the band's executive to wear his old uniform at his wedding. The ensuing deliberations were quite serious, but fortunately the outcome was positive for the bridegroom.

3 She expressed this view as part of a panel on Community Music at the annual conference of the South African Society of Research in Music in Stellenbosch, July 2010.

Appendix 1: Membership of the Christmas Bands Boards

South African United Christmas Bands Board

Established 21 March 2001 (six unions, 42 bands)

Boland Christmas Bands Union

Crusaders Christmas Choir – Worcester
Loving Shepherds Christmas Band – Slangrivier
Progess Christmas Band – Swellendam
Star of Calvary Christmas Band – Ladismith
United Stars Christmas Band – Athlone
Wisemen of the East Christmas Band – Elsiesriver
St Georges – Ceres

City and Suburban Christmas Bands Union

Bethlehem Star Christmas Band – Bishop Lavis
Good Hope Christmas Band – Grassy Park
Mitchell's Plain Crusaders Christmas Band – Mitchell's Plain
Mosselbaai Gemeenskaporkes (Mossel Bay Community Orchestra) – Mossel Bay
New Guiding Star Christmas Band – Oceanview
Star of Calvary Christmas Band – Heathfield
St Anthony's Christmas Band – Retreat
St Joseph's Christmas Band – Grassy Park
Valiant Heart Christmas Band – Mitchell's Plain
Victorian Christmas Band – Bonteheuwel
Wynberg Progress Christmas Band – Steenberg
Young Coronations – Kensington

Elsies River and District Christmas Bands Union

Norwood Crusaders Christmas Band – Leonsdale
Palm Crusaders – Ravensmead
Silver Stars Christmas Band – Elsiesriver
St Timothy's Christmas Band – Factreton
Young Royal Crusaders – Matrosfontein
Star of Glad Tidings Christmas Band – Uitsig

Northern Suburbs Christmas Bands Union

Jordan's Meerlust – Eesterivier
Star of Peace Christmas Band – Bishop Lavis
Symphonic Christian Band – Eesterivier

South Western District Christmas Bands Union

Bonnie Crusaders Christmas Band – Bonnievale
Guiding Stars Mossel Bay Christmas Band – Mossel Bay
Loving Shepherds (Bright Stars) Christmas Band – Slangrivier
New Born Stars Christmas Band – Slangrivier
Royal Crusaders Christmas Band – Riversdale
Star of Bethlehem Christmas Band – Grootbrak
St Moses Christmas Band – Zoar
Uni Stars Christmas Band – McGregor
Young Coronations Christmas Band – Suurbrak
Young Royal Crusaders – Barrydale

Western Cape Christmas Bands Union

Bloemhof Crusaders Christmas Band – Mitchell's Plain
Bonteheuwel Crusaders Christmas Band – Bonteheuwel
Crusaders Christmas Band – Grassy Park
Gospel Shepherds Christmas Band – Belhar
Robertson Old St Blues Christmas Band – Robertson

South African Christmas Bands Board

Established in 2008 (four unions, 30 bands)

Athlone and District Christmas Bands Union

All Saints Christmas Band – Elsies River
Bethlehem Stars Christmas Band – Grabouw
Emmanuel Sacred Band – Grassy Park
Star of Independence Christmas Band – Athlone
St Cecilia Christmas Band – Mitchells Plain
Young Guiding Star Sacred String Band – Ottery
Young Peace and Goodwill Christmas Band – Blue Downs

Cape Winelands Christmas Bands Union

Ceresians Christmas Band – Ceres
St Blues Christmas Band – Robertson

The Fleet Christmas Band – Worcester
Tulbagh Crusaders Christmas Band – Tulbagh
Wolseley Christmas Band – Wolseley

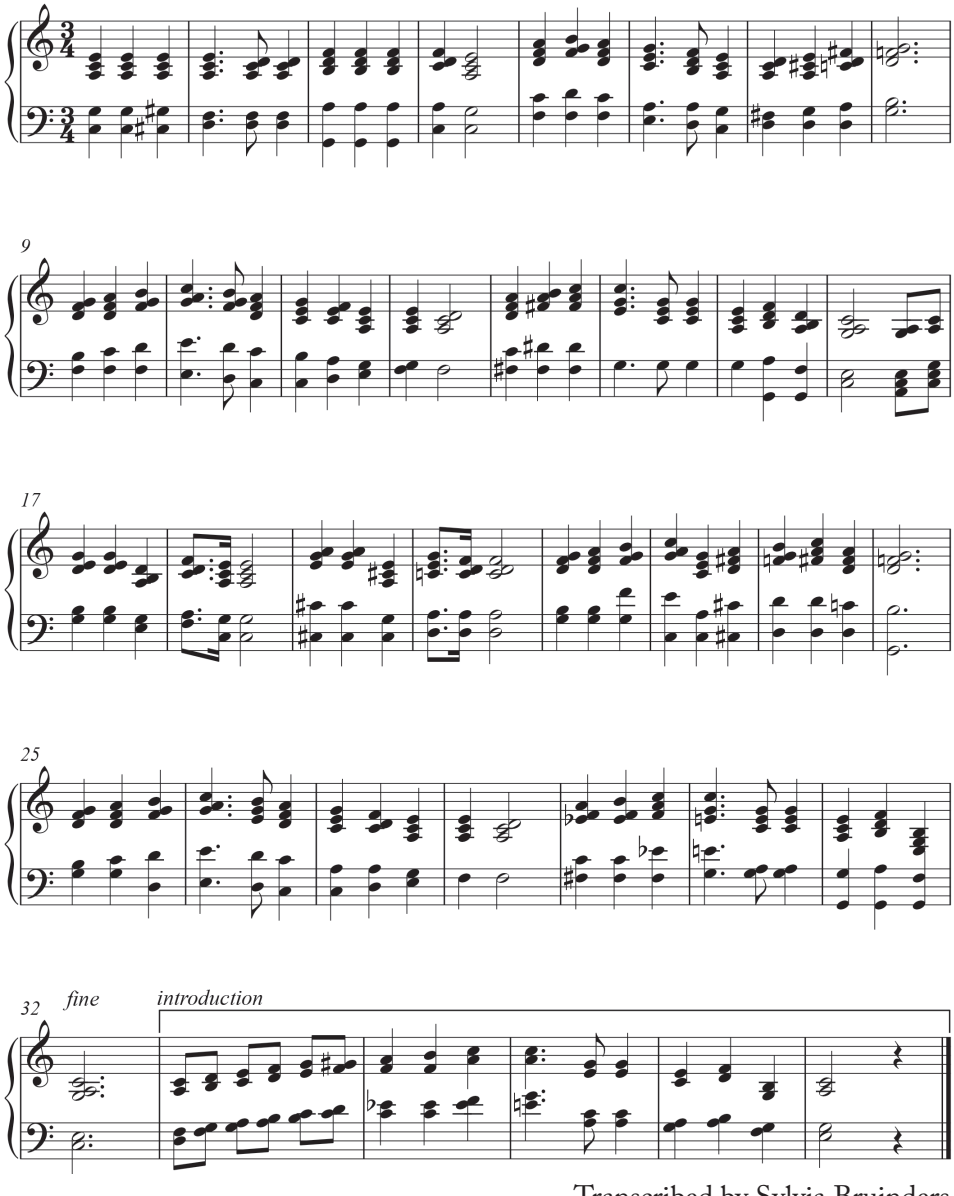
Peninsula and District Christmas Bands Union

Mossel Bay Crusaders Christmas Band – Mossel Bay
Robertson Harmonic Youth Band – Robertson
Royal Crusaders Christmas Band – Bellville
Royal Stars Christmas Band – Paarl
The Star of Remembrance – Elsiesriver
Young Good Shepherds Christmas Band – Ravensmead
Young Guiding Stars Sacred String Band – Hanover Park
Young Nightingales Christmas Band – Kensington
Young Royal Crusaders Christmas Band – Kensington

Western Cape and District Christmas Bands Union

Ceres Crusaders Christmas Band – Ceres
Peace and Goodwill Christmas Band – Silvertown
Perseverance Christmas Band – Elsiesriver
Pilgrim Crusaders Christmas Band – Bishop Lavis
Vision of Daniel Christmas Band – Worcester
Young Guiding Stars Christmas Band – Ravensmead
Young Royal Shepherds Christmas Band – Heidelberg

Appendix 2: Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness



Transcribed by Sylvia Bruinders

Appendix 3: Letter to the Athlone and District Union

Woodstock, Cape Town
February 12, 2008

To Whom It May Concern

It has come to my attention that certain bands are questioning the results of the musical items presented at the Athlone and District Christmas Bands Union Competition on 3 February 2008 at Vygieskraal. In particular, band members are accusing me of compromising my professional integrity, as I know members of the YGSSSB. I would like to state that the adjudication was a joint task between Mr Alistair McDonald and I. My role was to facilitate discussion around the criteria, while I allowed Mr McDonald to suggest the marks as he is a wind player and I am not. Hence, I was guided by his knowledge of wind ensemble playing.

My interest in the Christmas bands is of a professional nature: I am writing a doctoral dissertation on this unique cultural phenomenon, in which strong community-based organizations profess musical ministry. This is my primary interest. The competitions, whether observing them through adjudication or participation, are interesting in and of themselves, not because I have a particular interest in a band winning. As a researcher and academic, I am completely impartial to the results; they have no bearing on my research at all.

On the day the winning band was the one band where the intonation was not faulty, which was a problem across the board in varying degrees. This put them above all their competitors in all categories. In my discussions with band members of different unions, I sense a slavish adherence to the score as if that is what makes a piece musical. While the technical aspects such as correct notes, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics are important, they do not necessarily make for a musical rendition. Unfortunately, music calls for much more subtlety. It is the sensitive combination of these elements along with perceptive phrasing and breath control, attack and release of notes, good ensemble playing and expressive articulation that form the complete interpretation of a musical piece. Rather than an exact science, music is an interpretive art form and it would do Christmas band members well to work on those aspects as well.

I would like to set the record straight by explaining that although I have met some members of YGSSSB over the years, through St. Joseph's with whom I have close ties, I am not particularly close to any member/s of YGSSSB. I wanted to work with YGSSSB and Peace & Goodwill and went to one practice of each where I sat quietly observing and taking notes, but I did not advise either band on how to play. In fact, I do not recall that the "solo" was rehearsed at either practice. As I agreed to

be the adjudicator for the competition, I stopped going to the practices, although I did interview Ms Shirley and Mr Fred de Kock of YGSSSB and would still like to interview the musical directors and some union executive members of both bands. Interviews range from members' personal involvement to the history of the bands and unions, and perhaps some very general discussions on the music.

As he assisted with adjudication, this accusation is also an indictment on Alistair McDonald. Not only will we not compromise our professional integrity in this way but we certainly will not compromise the music. After all, music has to be the winner and professional standards and attitudes need to be passed on to the next generations so that this proud tradition of the Western Cape may continue for many more generations.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Bruinders

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3. Hannes September 25 July 2001
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5. Andrew September 30 July 2004
6. Wally Witbooi 26 June 2005
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8. Hannes September 19 January 2007
9. Peter Noble 19 January 2007
10. Anthony Tockley 15 March 2007
11. Brian de Wet 30 March 2007
12. Michael Heuvel 5 June 2007
13. Chris Petersen 11 September 2007
14. Sean Kierman 5 December 2007
15. Billy Baatjes 8 January 2008
16. Herman and Stanley de Wet 21 January 2008
17. Dennis Baartman and Cedric Malado 25 January 2008
18. Shirley de Kok 29 January 2008
19. Fred de Kock 31 January 2008
20. Bridget Engel 19 February 2008
21. Ingrid Fink 25 February 2008
22. Christine Fondling 26 February 2008

23. Christine (CS+) and Celeste (CS*) Schippers 4 April 2008
24. Cecil Tookley 25 May 2008
25. Rochelle Klassen 28 July 2008
26. Keith Moore 4 August 2008
27. Sheena Baron 4 August 2008
28. Delecia Maarman 7 August 2008
29. Peter Noble 19 January 2007
30. Anthony Tockley 12 August 2008
31. Sharon Tockley 12 August 2008
32. Byron Abrahams 12 August 2008
33. Paul Cipio 20 August 2008
34. Hannes September 10 October 2008
35. Percy Williams 8 December 2008
36. Alistair Mc Donald 21 January 2009
37. Keith Moore 8 June 2010
38. Renaldo Wales 21 June 2010

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About the Author

Dr Sylvia Bruinders is senior lecturer and head of Ethnomusicology and African Music at the South African College of Music at the University of Cape Town where she teaches courses in Ethnomusicology, African and World musics. A former Fulbright scholar, her dissertation on the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape received the Nicholas Temperley Award for Excellence in a Dissertation in Musicology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. In 2012, she received the African Humanities Program Postdoctoral Fellowship funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York to write a monograph based on her doctoral research from which she has already published several articles and book chapters. She enjoys Pilates, swimming and leisurely walks.

Parading Respectability

Dr Sylvia Bruinders

Parading respectability: The cultural and moral aesthetics of the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape, South Africa is an intimate and incisive portrait of the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape of South Africa. Drawing on her own on background as well as her extended research study period during which she became a band member and was closely involved in its day-to-day affairs, the author, Dr Sylvia Bruinders, documents this centuries-old expressive practice of ushering in the joy of Christmas through music by way of a social history of the coloured communities. In doing so, she traces the slave origins of the Christmas Bands Movement, as well as how the oppressive and segregationist injustices of both colonialism and apartheid, together with the civil liberties afforded in the South African Constitution (1996) after the country became a democracy in 1994 have shaped the movement.

I am positively impressed by the levels of precision and writing style, and the range of secondary sources that inform this manuscript. It will definitely make a significant contribution to ethnography of postcolonial performance traditions in Africa.
Professor Daniel Avorgbedor, Music and African Studies, University of Ghana

This book will fill a gap in existing scholarship. It has relevance to the humanities in Africa in general in its attention to the impact of colonialism and the attendant marginalization of this population group to the point that this tradition emerged as a vehicle to establish a semblance of "respectability" in reactions to a negative stereotype.
Dr Diane Thram. International Library of African Music, Rhodes University

Back cover: Young Royal Shepherds standing at attention at the competitions in 2014 (left); Bellville Royal Crusaders parading on Palm Sunday in The Company's Garden 2013 (middle); St Joseph's Christmas Band Road March 2013 (right)

Front cover: St Joseph's "Solo" Performance February 2011

Photographs © Paul Grendon

ISBN 978-1-920033-19-4

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Carnegie Corporation of New York
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AHP Publications